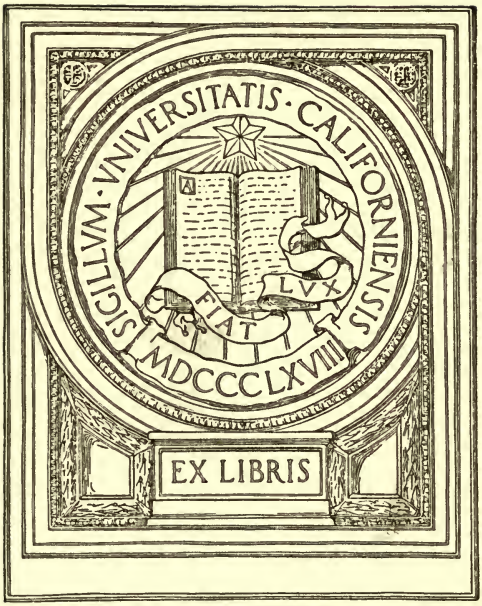
The KENTUCKY WARBLER

JAMES LANE ALLEN


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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER



"There He Was—The Kentucky Warbler!"

THE KENTUCKY WARBLER

BY

JAMES LANE ALLEN



When the population of this immense Western Republic will have diffused itself over every acre of ground fit for the comfortable habitation of man, . . . then not a warbler shall flit through our thickets, but its name, its notes, its habits will be familiar to all — repeated in their sayings and celebrated in their village songs.

—ALEXANDER WILSON

WITH A
FRONTISPIECE IN COLOUR

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1918

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TRANSLATION INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES,
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TO
THE YOUNG KENTUCKY
FOREST-LOVER

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THE KENTUCKY WARBLER



I

THE HOME

WEBSTER, along with thousands of other lusty forward-looking Kentucky children, went to the crowded public schools.

There every morning against his will but with the connivance of his parents he was made a prisoner, as it seemed to him, and for long hours held as such while many things disagreeable or unnecessary, some by one teacher and some by another, were forced into his head. Soon after they were forced in

most of the things disappeared from the head. What became of them nobody knew: Webster didn't know and he didn't care. During the forcing-in process month by month and year by year he now and then picked up a pleasant idea for himself, some wonderful idea about great things on ahead in life or about the tempting world just outside school. He picked up such ideas with ease and eagerness and held on to them.

He lived in a small white-frame cottage which was rather new but already looked rather old. It stood in a small green yard, which was naturally very old but still looked young. The still-young yard and the already-ageing cottage were to be found—should anybody have tried to find them—on the

rim of the city. If the architectural plan of the city had been mapped out as an open-air theatre, the cottage would have been a rear seat in the very last row at the very lowest price. The block was made up of such cottages—rear seats. They faced the city but couldn't see the city, couldn't see anything worth seeing, and might as well have looked in some other direction or not looked at all.

If Webster stepped out of the front door, he was within five yards of the outmost thoroughfare—native dirt-road for milk wagons, butchers' wagons, coal carts, and fruit-and-berry wagons. Webster's father kept an especial eye on the coal carts: they weighed heavily on his salary. Webster's mother kept her eye on the fruit-

and-berry wagons: they tantalised her passion for preserves. Everybody kept uneasy eyes on milk and butchers' and vegetable wagons, which brought expensive satisfaction to appetites for three meals a day. The edges of the thoroughfare were paths for the cottagers, all of whom walked and were glad and grateful even to be able to walk. The visitors of the cottagers walked. Everybody walked but the drivers. The French would have called the street The Avenue of Soles.

One wet winter morning as Webster, walking beside his father, lifted his feet out of the mud and felt sorry about their shoes, he complained because there was no pavement.

"My son," replied his father, whose remarks on any subject appeared to

come out of a clear sky, so unclouded were they by uncertainty, "my son, your father's salary is not a paved-sidewalk salary. The mud on your shoes is in an inverse ratio to the funds in his pockets. I believe you have learned in your arithmetic at school by this time what ratio is."

One dry summer morning as Webster walked beside his father, a butcher's wagon whirled past and covered them quickly with dust. He considered this injury to their best clothes and complained because there was no watering-cart.

"My son," replied his father out of his daily clear sky, "my salary is not a watering-cart salary. The presence of the earth's dust in your eyes exactly equals the lack of gold-dust in your

father's earthly account. I believe by this time you have studied equations."

But if Webster had stepped out of the back door of the cottage and passed under the clothesline which was held up at its middle point by a forked pole, if he had crossed their very small vegetable garden and then had crossed a wide deep cow-lot where some rich man of the city pastured his fat milk cows, he would have been on the edge of the country. It was possible for one standing on the rear porch to see all summer thick, softly waving woods.

Within the past two or three years, as summer had come again and the world turned green, a change had taken place in Webster, a growth. More and more he began to look from the porch or windows at those distant massed

trees. Something from them seemed to cross over to him, an influence powerful and compelling; it drew him out of the house back with it into the mystery of the forest and he never returned.

In truth, almost as soon as he could go anywhere he had started toward the forest without asking permission. They had overtaken him then and dragged him back. When he was old enough to understand, they had explained: he was too young, he would get lost, the bull would hook him.

"But why?" Webster had asked, complaining of this new injustice in the world. He was perpetually being surprised that so many things in the world were bent on getting one into trouble; all around him things seemed to be waiting to make trouble. "Why

should the bull hook *me? I've* done nothing to *the bull.*"

They were about finishing breakfast. He was eating in his slow ruminant way—he ate enormously but never hungrily. His father, whose custom it was to divide the last half of his breakfast with the first half of his newspaper, lowered the paper and looked over the top.

"My son," he said, "the bull has horns. Every living creature is bound to use everything it has. Use what you have or lose what you have—that is the terrible law in this world. Therefore the bull is obliged to hook what he can to keep his horns going. If you give him the chance, he will practise them on you. Otherwise his great-great-grandson might not have any

horns when he really needed them. Do you understand?"

"No," said Webster.

"I'll explain again when you are mature enough to comprehend," said his father, returning to his paper.

Webster returned to the subject.

"If I ever have any money in my pocket, you always tell me not to spend it: now you say I ought to use whatever I have."

His father quickly lowered his paper and raised his voice:

"I have never said that you must use everything all at once, my son. You must learn to use it at the right time."

"When *is* the right time to use a thing?" asked Webster, eating quietly on.

"I'll answer that question when it is necessary," his father replied grumblingly from behind his paper, putting an end to the disturbance.

A few weeks prior to this breakfast-scene Webster one day at recess had laid bare a trouble in himself, confiding it to one of his intimate school-mates. He did so with a tone of uncertainty, for he was not sure but he was not being disloyal.

"Can *your* father answer all the questions *you* ask *him?*"

"Not half of them!" exclaimed the comrade with splendid candour—"Not half!"

"My father answers very few *I* ask *him,*" interposed a fragile little white-faced fellow who had strolled up in time to catch the drift of the confiden-

tial talk. He did not appear strong enough even to put a question: he nursed a ragged ball, had lost a front tooth, and gave off the general skim-milk look which some children carry about with them.

Webster, without inquiring further, began to feel a new respect for himself as not being worse off than other boys as to fathers; also a new respect for his father as not being worse than his class: fathers were deficient!

Remembering this discovery at school—one of the big pleasant ideas he picked up outside lessons—he did not on the morning in question press his father more closely as to using horns when you have them and not using money when you have it. In fact, he was already beginning to shield his

father and had quite ceased to interrogate him in company, lest he expose some ignorance. He therefore credited this incident where it belonged: as a part of his growing knowledge that he couldn't look to his father for any great help on things that puzzled him—fathers, as had been said, being deficient, though always contriving to look so proficient that from merely surveying them you would never suspect the truth.

Webster's father was a minor bookkeeper in one of the city's minor banks. Like his bankbooks, he was always perfectly balanced, perfectly behaved; and he was also perfectly bald. Even his baldness might have been credited to him as one of the triumphs of exact calculation: the baldness of one side

being exactly equal to the baldness of the other: hardly a hair on either exposure stood out as an unaccounted-for remainder.

Webster thought of his father as having worked at nothing but arithmetic for nearly forty years. Sometimes it became a kind of disgust to him to remember this: as was his custom when displeased at anything he grew contemptuous. In one of his contemptuous moments he one day asked:

"How many times have you made the figure 2?"

"Three quadrillion times, my son," replied his father with perfect accuracy and a spirit of hourly freshness. His father went on:

"The same number of times for all

of them. When you're in the thousands, you may think one or the other figure is ahead, but when you get well on into the millions, there isn't any difference: they are neck and neck."

This subject of arithmetic was the sorest that father and son could have broached: perhaps that was the reason why neither could get away from it. The family lived on arithmetic or off it—had married on it, were born unto it, were fed by it, housed and heated by it, ventilated and cooled by it. Webster's father's knowledge of arithmetic had marched at the head of the family as they made their way through time and trouble like music. It had been a lifelong bugle-blast of correct numerals.

Hence the terrible disappointment: after Webster had been at school long enough for grading to begin to come home as to what faculties he possessed and the progress he made, his parents discovered to their terror and shame that he was good in nothing and least good in arithmetic. It was like a child's turning against his own bread and butter and shirt and shoes. To his father it meant a clear family breakdown. The moment had come to him which, in unlike ways, comes to many a father when he feels obliged to say: "This is no son of mine."

In reality, Webster's father had had somewhat that feeling from the first. When summoned and permitted, he had tipped into the room on the day of Webster's birth and taken a father's

anxious defensive look. He had turned off with a gesture of repudiation but of the deepest respect:

"No such head and countenance ever descended to him from me! We must be square with him from the start! I place to his credit the name of Daniel Webster. His mother, instead of admiring her husband, had been gazing too fondly at the steel engraving of the statesman over the mantelpiece in the parlour."

When Webster was several years old, one day during a meal—nobody knew just what brought forth the question—he asked:

"Why was I named Webster?"

His father answered:

"Because you looked like him."

Webster got up quietly and went

into the parlour and quietly returned to his seat at table:

"No, I don't look like him," he said.

"You looked like him the day you were born, my son. Any resemblance to Daniel Webster is apt to become less and less. Finally, you don't look like him any more. In the United States Senate nowadays, for instance, there isn't a trace of resemblance left anywhere. Senators at present look more like me and you know what that means: it means that nobody need feel obliged to think of Daniel Webster!"

That birthday jest—that he was not quite entitled to the nativity of his own son, an uneasiness perhaps inherited by fathers from the rudimentary marriages of primitive society—was but a jest then. It gradually took

on serious meaning as his son grew further away from him with each year of growth. The bad passing of the arithmetic milestone had brought the worst distinct shock. Still, even that left Webster's father perfectly balanced, perfectly behaved: he remained proud of his unlike offspring, fed and clothed him, and was fond of him.

There is a bare possibility also that in Webster he saw the only chance to risk part of his salary in secret speculation. Nearly everybody in the town gambled on something. The bank did not favour the idea that its employees should enjoy any such monetary pastime. But even a bank cannot prevent a father from betting on his own son if he keeps the indiscretion

to himself. Thus it is barely possible that, in the language of the country, Webster's father took chances on Webster as a winning colt on some unknown track, if he should ever take a notion to run! Why not bet, if it cost the same as not to bet: at least you had the excitement?

Webster on his part grew more and more into the belief that his father not only could not answer his questions but—what was of far greater consequence—did not open up before him any path in life. His first natural and warm desire had been to imitate his father, to follow in his footsteps: slowly he discovered that his father did not have any footsteps, he made no path. His affection still encircled his father like a pair of arms; his eyes had com-

pletely abandoned him as a sign-post on life's road.

Mothers often open up roads for their sons or point them out, but Webster could not look to his mother for one unless he had wished to take a short road to an uneventful past. The kind of a mother she was resulted from the kind of a wife she was. She had taken her husband's arm at marriage to keep step at his side through life. Had he moved forward, she would have moved forward. Since he did not advance, but in his life-work represented a kind of perpetual motion without progress, she stayed by him and busied herself with multifarious daily little motions of her own. Her roadless life had one main path of memory. That led her backward to a large orchard and

garden and yard out in the country, filled with fruit trees and berry-bearing bushes and vines. She, now a middle-aged wife and mother, was a sentimental calendar of far-away things "just ripe." The procession of fruit-and-berry wagons past the cottage from May to October had upon her the effect of an acute exacerbation of this chronic lament. The street cry of a vendor, no matter how urgent her duty anywhere in the cottage at the moment, brought her to a front window or to the front porch or even swept her out to the front gate, to gratify her eyes with memories and pay her respects to the impossible. She inquired the cost of so much and bought so little that the drivers, who are keen and unfavourable judges of human nature,

when they met at cross streets and compared notes—the disappointed, exasperated drivers named her *Mrs. Price:* though one insisted upon calling her *Lady Not-Today.* Whenever at the bottom of her pocketbook she found spare change for a box of brilliant, transparent red cherries, she bore it into the cottage as rapaciously as some miser of jewels might have carried off a casket of rubies. Thus you could almost have said that Webster had been born of arithmetic and preserves. Still, his life with his father and mother was wholesome and affectionate and peaceful—an existence bounded by the horizon of the day.

His boyhood certainly had no wide field of vision, no distant horizon, as regards his sleeping quarters. In build-

ing the cottage a bathroom on the first floor had been added to one side of it as a last luxurious afterthought. If you stood before the cottage and looked it squarely in the face, the bathroom protruded on one side like a badly swollen jaw. The building-plan when worked out, had involved expense beyond the calculation, as usually happens, and this had threatened the Salary: the extra bath, therefore, remained unrealised. Webster always asked at least one question about everything new and untried, and when old enough to be put there to sleep, he had looked around the cramped enclosure and inquired why it had been built. Thus he learned that in the family he had now taken the place of the Bath That Failed. It caused him a queer feeling

as to his general repute in the neighbourhood that the very sight of him might bring to any observer's mind thoughts of a missing tub.

His window opened upon a few feet of yard. Just over the fence was the kitchen window of the cottage next in the row. When that window was open, Webster had to see the kitchen table and the preparation for meals. He violently disliked the sight of the preparations. If the window was closed, tidings as to what was going on reached him through another sense; his bedroom-bathroom became as a whispering gallery of cooking odours. But their own kitchen was just across a narrow hall, and fragrances from it occasionally mingled with those from the kitchen over the fence. Made

hungry by nasal intelligence of something appetising, Webster would sometimes hurriedly dress and follow his pointer into the breakfast room, only to find that he was on a false trail: what he had expected to get his share of was being consumed by the family next door. He no longer had confidence, so to speak, in his own nose—not as a leading authority on meals to be eaten by him.

One beautiful use his window had, one glorious use, one enchantment. In the depth of winter sometimes of mornings when he got out of bed and went to open the shutter, on the window panes would be a forest of glittering trees. The first time he beheld such a forest, he stood before it spell-bound: wondering whether there were silvery

birds singing far off amid the silvery boughs and what wild frost-creatures crouched in the tall stiff frost-grass. From the ice-forests on his window panes his thoughts always returned to the green summer forest on the distant horizon.

The pest of his existence at home was Elinor—a year younger but much older in her ways: to Webster she was as old as Mischief, as old as Evil. For Elinor had early fastened herself upon his existence as a tease. She laughed at him, ridiculed his remarks, especially when he thought them wise, dragged down everything in him. As they sat at table and he launched out upon any subject with his father—quite in the manner of one gentleman indulging his intellect with another gentleman over

their rich viands—Elinor went away up into a little gallery of her own and tried to boo him off the stage. His father and mother did not at times conceal their amusement at Elinor's boo's. He sometimes broke out savagely at her, which only made her worse. His mother, who was not without gentle firmness and a saving measure of good sense, one day disapproved of his temper and remarked advisedly to him, Elinor having fled after a victory over him:

"Elinor teases you because she sees that it annoys you. She ought to keep on teasing you till you stop being annoyed. When she sees that she can't tease you, she'll stop trying."

That was all very well: but one day he teased Elinor. She puckered up and

began to cry and his mother said quickly:

"Don't do that, Webster."

Then besides: a few years before he had one day overheard his mother persuading his father that Elinor must not be sent to the public school.

"I want her to go to a private school. She has such a difficult disposition, it will require delicate attention. The teachers haven't time to give her that patient attention in the public schools."

"My dear," Elinor's father had replied, shaking his head, "your husband's salary is not a private-school salary. It also has a difficult disposition, it also requires the most careful watching!"

"The cost will be more but she must go. Some extra expense will be un-

avoidable even for her clothing but I'll take that out of *my* clothes."

"You will do nothing of the kind! If Elinor has a difficult disposition, she gets it from Elinor's father; for *he* had one once, thank God! He had it until he went into the bank. But a bank takes every kind of disposition out of you, good or bad. After you've been in a bank so many years, you haven't any more disposition. Only the president of a bank enjoys the right to have a disposition. All the rest of us are mere habits—certain habits on uncertain salaries. Let Elinor go to her select school and I'll go a little more ragged. The outside world thinks it a bank joke when they look through the windows and see bank clerks at work in ragged coats: instead they know bet-

ter. Let Elinor go and let the damages fall on her father. He will be glad to take the extra cost off his own back as a tribute to his unbanked boyhood. I hope you noticed my pun—my dooble intender."

Thus Elinor was sent to the most select private school of the city. Webster weighed the matter on the scales of boyish justice. If you had a bad disposition, you were rewarded by being better dressed and being sent to the best school; if you had a good disposition, you dressed plainly and went to the public school. What ought he to do about his own disposition? Why not turn it into a bad one? It was among Webster's bewilderments that he was so poorly off as not to be able to muster a troublesome enough disposition to

be sent to one of the city's select private schools for boys: he should very much have liked to go!

"I go to a private school because I am *nice*," Elinor had boasted to him one morning. She was sitting on the front steps as he came out on his way to school, and she looked very dainty and very charming—a dark, wiry, fiery, restless little creature, and at the moment a bit of brilliant decoration. "And I get nice marks," she added pointedly.

He paused to make a quietly contemptuous reply.

"Of course you get nice marks: that's what private schools are for—to give everybody nice marks. If you went to the public school, you'd get what you deserved."

"Then you seem to deserve very

little," said Elinor, smoothing a lock of her black hair over one ear.

His rage burst out at her deadly thrust:

"You go to a private school because you are a little devil," he said.

"Why don't you be a little devil too?" inquired Elinor, her bright eyes mocking him. "Can't you be a little devil too?"

He jerked the strap tighter around his battered books:

"If you were in the public schools, they wouldn't put up with you. They'd send you home or they'd break you in."

"Oh, I don't know," said Elinor, with an encouraging smile, "they seem to get along with you very well."

Webster knew that Elinor's teasing,

ridiculing eyes followed him as he walked away. They became part of the things that cheapened him in his life. When he had passed through the front gate, he started off in a direction which was not the direction to school.

Elinor sang out shrilly:

"I know where you are going. But it's of no use. Jenny's sweetheart goes to a private school and he stands well in his classes."

He walked on, but turned his face toward her:

"It's none of *your* meddlesome business, you little black scorpion," he said quietly.

With an upward bound of his nature he thought of Jenny, a very different sort of girl.

Jenny lived in the largest cottage of

the block, at the better of the two corners. The families visited intimately. Jenny's father was a coal merchant and Webster's father bought his coal of Jenny's father. A grocer lived in the middle of the block: he bought supplies from that grocer. "If you can," he said, "deal with your neighbours. It will make them more careful: they won't dare . . .!" On the contrary, Jenny's father did not deposit his cheques in Webster's father's bank. "Don't do your business with a neighbour," he said. "Neighbours pry."

Jenny represented in Webster's life the masculine awakening of his nature toward womankind. In the white light of that general dawn, she stood revealed but not recognised. A little thing had happened, the summer pre-

vious, which was of common interest to them. In a corner of Jenny's yard grew a locust tree, not a full forest-sized locust tree but still quite a respectable locust tree for its place and advantages. All around the trunk and up the trunk clambered the trumpet-vine. Several yards from the earth some of the branches bent over and spread out as a roof for a little arbour —Jenny's summer play-house.

One dewy morning Jenny had first noticed a humming-bird hovering about the blossoms. She did not know that it was the ruby-throat, seeking the trumpet-vine where Audubon painted him. She only knew that she was excited and delighted. She told Webster.

"If he comes back, run and tell me,

will you, Jenny?" he pleaded, with some strange new joy in him. Several times she had run and summoned him; and the two children, unconsciously drawing nearer to each other, and hand in hand watched the ruby-throat hovering about the adopted flower of the State.

The distant green forest and the locust tree with the trumpet-vine and the humming-bird—these, though distant from one another, became in Webster's mind part of something deep and powerful in his life, toward which he was moving.

If no road opened before him at home, none opened at school. He would gladly have quit any day. He tried to make lessons appear worse than they were in order to justify him-

self in his philosophy of contempt and rejection.

When any two old ladies met on the street, he argued, they did not begin to parse as fast as possible at each other. Old gentlemen of the city did not walk up and down with books glued to their noses, trying to memorise things they would rather forget. When people went to the library for delightful books to read, nobody took home arithmetics and geographies. There wasn't a grown person in the city who cared what bounded Indiana on the north or if all the creeks in Maine emptied into the mouths of school teachers. In church, when the minister climbed to the pulpit, the congregation didn't begin to examine him in history. They didn't even examine him in the Bible;

he couldn't have stood the examination if they had. In the court-room, at the fair, at the races, at the theatre, when you were born, when you were playing, when you had a sweetheart, when you married, when you were a father, when you were sick, when you were in any way happy or unhappy, when you were dying, when you were dead and buried and forgotten, nobody called for school books.

Webster, nevertheless, both at home and at school made his impression. No one could have defined the nature of the impression but every one knew he made it. If he failed at his lessons, his teachers were not angry; they looked mortified and said as little as possible and all the while pushed him along by hook or crook, until at last they had

smuggled him into high school—the final heaven of the whole torment.

The impression upon his school fellows was likewise strongly in his favour. Toward the close of each session there was intense struggle and strain for the highest mark in class and the next highest and the next. When the nerve-racking race was over and everybody had time to look around and inquire for Webster, they could see him cantering quietly down the home stretch, unmindful of the good-natured jeers that greeted his arrival: he had gone over the course, he had not run. As soon as they were out of doors in a game, Webster stepped to the front. Those who had just outstripped him now followed him.

Roadless parents—a child looking

for its road in life! That is Nature's plan to stop imitation, to block the roads of parents to their children, and force these into new paths for the development of the individual and of the race. And in what other country is that spectacle so common as in our American democracy, where progress is so swift and the future so vast and untrod and untried that nearly every generation in thousands of cottages represents a revolt and a revolution of children against their parents, their work and their ways? But Webster's father and mother were not philosophers as to how Nature works out her plan through our American democracy: they merely had their parental apprehensions and confidentially discussed these. What would Webster

be, would he ever be anything? He would finish at high school this year and it was time to decide.

A son of the grocer in the block had made an unexpected upward stride in life and surprised all the cottagers. Webster's father and mother took care to bring this meritorious example to their son's attention.

"What are *you* going to be, Webster?" his mother asked one morning at breakfast, looking understandingly at Webster's father.

"I don't know what I'm going to be," Webster had replied unconcernedly. "I know I'm not going to be what *he* is!"

"It would never do to try to force him," his father said later. "Not *him*. Besides, think of a couple of American

parents undertaking to force their children to do anything—*any* children! We'll have to wait a while longer. If he's never to be anything, of course forcing could never make him into something. It would certainly bring on a family disturbance and the family disturbance would be sure to get on my nerves at the bank and I might make mistakes in my figures."

Then in the April of that year, about the time the woods were turning green and he began to look toward them with the old longing now grown stronger, a great thing happened to Webster.



II

THE SCHOOL

ONE clear morning of that budding month of April, a professor from one of the two institutions of learning in the city stood before the pupils of the high school.

He was there to fulfill his part of an experimental plan which, through the courtesy of all concerned, had been started upon its course at the opening of the session the previous autumn: that members of the two faculties should be asked to be good enough to come

—some one of them once each month—and address the school on some pleasant field or by-field of university work, where learning at last meets life. That is, each professor was requested to appear before the ravenous pupils of the high school with a basket of ripe fruit from his promised land of knowledge and to distribute these as samples from an orchard which each pupil, if he but chose, could some day own for himself. Or if he could not quite bring anything so luscious and graspable as fruit, he might at least stand in their full view on the boundary of his kingdom and mark out, across that dubious Common which lies between high school and college, a path that would lead a boy straight to some one of the world's great highways of knowledge.

Eight professors had courteously responded to this invitation and had disclosed eight splendid roadways of the world's study. The Latin professor had opened up his colossal Roman-built highway with its pictures of the ages when all the world's thoroughfares led to Rome. The professor of Greek had disclosed the longer path which leads back to Hellas with its frieze of youth in eternal snow. The professor of Astronomy had taken his band of listeners forth into the immensities of roadless space and had all but lost them and the poor little earth itself in the coming and going of myriads of entangled stars. Eight professors had come, eight professors had gone, it was now April, a professor of Geology, as next to the last lecturer, stood before them.

Interest in the lectures had steadily mounted from the first and was now at highest pitch. He faced an audience eager, intelligent, respectful and grateful. On their part they consented that the man before them embodied what he had come to teach—the blending of life and learning. Plainly the study of the earth's rocks had not hardened him, acquaintance with fossils had not left him a human fossil. And he hid the number of his years within the sap of living sympathies as a tree hides the notation of its years within the bark.

Letting his eyes wander over them silently for a moment, he began without waste of a word—a straightforward and powerful personality.

"I am going to speak to you boys

about a boy who never reached high school. I want you to watch how that boy's life, first seen in the distance through mist and snow and storm as a faint glimmering spark, rudely blown upon by the winds of misfortune, endangered and all but ready to go out—I want you to watch how that endangered spark of a boy's life slowly begins to brighten in the distance, to grow stronger, and finally to draw nearer and nearer until at last it shines as a great light about you here in this very place. Watch, I say, how a troubled ray, low on life's horizon, at last becomes a star in the world of men, high fixed and resplendent—to be seen by human eyes as long as there shall be human eyes to see anything."

He saw that he had caught their at-

tention. Their sympathy reacted upon him.

"Before I speak of the boy I wish to speak of a book. I hope all of you have read one of the very beautiful stories of English literature by George Eliot called *Silas Marner.* If you have, none of you will ever forget that Silas Marner belonged to a class of pallid, undersized men who, a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, under pressure upon the centres of population in England and through competition of trade, were driven out of the towns into the country. There, as strangers, as alien-looking remnants of a discredited race, there in districts far away among the lanes or in the deep bosom of the hills, perhaps an hour's ride from any turnpike or beyond the

faint sound of the coach-horn, they spent their lives as obscure weavers and peddlers.

"You will never forget George Eliot's vivid, powerful, touching picture of Silas Marner at work in a little stone cottage near a deserted stone pit, amid the nut-bearing hedgerows of the village of Raveloe. When the schoolboys of the village came to the hedges in autumn to gather nuts or in spring to look for bird-nests—you boys still do that, I hope—when they came and heard the uncanny sound of the loom, so unlike that of the familiar flail on threshing floors, they would crowd around the windows and peep in at the weaver in his treadmill attitude, weaving like a solitary spider month after month and year after year his endless

web. Silas Marner, pausing in his work to adjust some trouble in his thread and discovering them and annoyed by the intrusion, would descend from the loom and come to his door and gaze out at them with his strange, blurred, protuberant eyes; for he was so near-sighted that he could see distinctly only objects close to him, such as his thread, his shuttle, his loom.

"If for a few days the sound of the loom stopped, it was because the weaver, with his pack on his feeble shoulders, was away on journeys through fields and lanes to deliver his linen to those who had ordered it or who might haply buy.

"The village of Raveloe, as you remember, lay on the rich, central plain of Merry England, with wooded hol-

lows and well-walled orchards and ornamental weathercocks and church spires rising peacefully above green tree-tops. But Silas Marner saw nothing of the Merry England through which he peddled his cloth. He walked through it all with the outdoor loneliness of those who cannot see. His mother had bequeathed him knowledge of a few herbs; and these were the only thing in nature that he had ever gropingly looked for along hedgerows and lanesides—foxglove and dandelion and coltsfoot.

"Now, if you have read the story, you have a far more living, touching picture of the life of a weaver in those distant times that I could possibly paint. The genius of George Eliot painted it supremely and I point to

her masterpiece rather than to any faint semblance I could draw. What I want you to do is to get deeply into your minds what the life of a weaver in those days meant: a little further on you will understand why.

"Next I want you to think of Silas Marner as an all too common figure of the present time. He is a type of those of us who go through our lives all but blind to the surpassingly beautiful life of the planet on which it is our strange and glorious destiny to spend our human days. He is a type of those of us who, in town or city, see only the implements of our trade or business ever close to our eyes—our shuttle, our thread, our loom, of whatever kind these may be. When we go out into the world of nature, he is also

a type of those of us, who recognise only the few things we need—our colts-foot, our foxglove, our dandelion, of whatever kind these may be. In the midst of woods and fields we gaze blankly around us with vision blurred by ignorance—not born blind but remaining as blind because we do not care or have not learned to open and to train our eyes. We have the outdoor loneliness of Silas Marner."

He waited a few moments to allow his words to make their impression, and long accustomed to the countenance of listeners, he felt sure that they were following him in the road he pursued: then he led them forward:

"Now, about the period that George Eliot paints the life of her poor English

weaver there lived, not in Merry England but in Bonnie Scotland—and to be bonnie is not to be merry—there lived in the little town of Paisley, in the west of Scotland, a man by the name of Alexander Wilson, a poor illiterate distiller. He had a son—the boy I am to tell you about.

"The poor illiterate distiller and father desired to give his son his name but not to assign him his place in life, not his own road; he named him Alexander and he wished him to be not a distiller but a physician. The boy's mother was a native of an island of the Hebrides—your geographies will have to tell you where the Hebrides are, for doubtless you have all forgotten! The inhabitants of those wild, bleak, storm-swept islands thought much of danger

and death and therefore often of God. Perhaps the natives of small islands are, as a rule, either very superstitious or very religious. His mother desired him to be a minister. You may not know that the Scotch people are, perhaps, peculiarly addicted to being either doctors of the body or doctors of the soul. The entire Scottish race would appear to be desirous of being physicians to something or to somebody—not submitting easily, however, to be doctored!

"Thus the boy's father and mother opened before him the two main honoured roads of Scottish life and bade him choose. He chose neither, for he was self-willed and wavering, and did not know his own mind or his own wish. He did know that he would not take

the roads his parents pointed out; as to them he was a roadless boy.

"His mother died when he was quite young, a stepmother stepped into a stepmother's place, and she quickly decided with Scotch thrift. A third Scottish road should be opened to the boy and into that he should be pushed and made to go: he must be put to trade. Accordingly, when he was about eleven years old, he was taken from school and bound as an apprentice to a weaver: we lament child labour now: it is an old lament.

"The boy hated weaving as, perhaps, he never hated anything else in his life and in time he hated much and he hated many things. He seems soon to have become known as the lazy weaver. Years afterward he put into

bitter words a description of the weaver: 'A weaver is a poor, emaciated, helpless being, shivering over rotten yarn and groaning over his empty flour barrel.' Elsewhere he called the weaver a scarecrow in rags. He wrote a poem entitled *Groans from the Loom.*

"Five interminable years of those groans and all his eager, wild, headstrong, liberty-loving boyhood was ended: gone from him as he sat like a boy-spider with a thread passing endlessly into a web. During these interminable years, whenever he lifted his eyes from his loom and looked ahead, he could see nothing but penury and dependence and loneliness—his loom to the end of his life.

"Five years of this imprisonment and then he was eighteen and his own

master; and the first thing he did was to descend from the loom, take a pack of cloth upon his shoulders and go wandering away from the hills and valleys and lakes of Scotland—free at last like a young deer in the heather. He said of himself that from that hour when his eyes had first opened on the light of grey Scotch mountains, the world of nature had called him. He did not yet know what the forest and the life of the forest meant or would ever mean; he only knew that there he was happy and at home.

"Thus, like Silas Marner, he became a poor weaver and peddler but not with Silas Marner's eyes. Seldom in any human head has the mechanism of vision been driven by a mind with such power and eagerness to observe. And

he had the special memory of the eye. There are those of us who have the special memory of the ear or of taste or of touch. He had the long, faithful recollection of things seen. With this pair of eyes during the next several years he traversed on foot three-fourths of Scotland. Remember, you boys of the rolling blue-grass plateau, what the scenery of Scotland is! Think what it meant to traverse three-fourths of that country, you who consider it a hardship to walk five level miles, a misfortune to be obliged to walk ten, the adventure of a lifetime to walk twenty.

"But though he followed one after another well nigh all the roads of Scotland, he could find in all Scotland no road of life for him. It is true that

certain misleading paths beckoned to him, as is apt to be true in every life. Thus he had conceived a great desire to weave poetry instead of cloth, to weave music instead of listening to the noise of the loom: he had his flute and his violin. But what he accomplished with poetry and flute and violin were obstacles to his necessary work and rendered this harder. The time he gave to them made his work less: the less his work, the less his living; the less his living, the more his troubles and hardships.

"Once he started out both to peddle his wares and to solicit orders for a little book of his poems he wished to publish. To help both pack and poetry he wrote a handbill in verse. Some of the lines ran thus:

"'Here's handkerchiefs charming, book muslins like ermine,
Brocaded, striped, corded, or checked.
Sweet Venus, they say, on Cupid's birthday
In British-made muslin was decked.

"'Now, ye Fair, if you choose any piece to peruse,
With pleasure I'll instantly show it.
If the peddler should fail to be favoured with sale,
Then I hope you'll encourage the poet.'

"The result seems to have been but small sale for British-made muslins and no sale at all for Wilson-made poems.

"Robert Burns was just then the idolised poet of Scotland, a new sun shining with vital splendour into all Scottish hearts. Friends of the young weaver and apparently the young weaver himself thought there was room in

Scotland for another Burns. Some of his poems were published anonymously and the authorship was attributed to Burns. That was bad for him, it made bad worse. Wilson greatly desired to know the rustic poet-king of Scotland. The two poets met in Edinburgh and were to become friends. Then Burns published *Tam O'Shanter.* As young Kentuckians, of course, you love horses and cannot be indifferent even to poems on the tails of horses. Therefore, you must already know the world's most famous poem concerning a horse-tail—*Tam O'Shanter.* The Paisley weaver by this time had such conceit of himself as a poet that he wrote Burns a caustic letter, telling him the kind of poem *Tam O'Shanter* should and should not be. Burns replied, closing the cor-

respondence, ending the brief friendship and leaving the weaver to go back to his loom. It was a terrible rebuff, and left its mark on an already discouraged man.

"Next Wilson wrote an anonymous poem, so violently attacking a wealthy manufacturer on behalf of his poor brother weavers, that the enraged merchant demanded the name of the writer and had him put in prison and compelled him to stand in the public cross of Paisley and burn his poem.

"Darker, bitterer days followed. He shrank away to a little village even more obscure than his birthplace. There, lifting his eyes, again he looked all over Scotland: he saw the wrongs and sufferings of the poor, the luxury and oppression of the rich: he blamed

the British government for evils inherent in human nature and for the imperfections of all human society: turned against his native country and at heart found himself without a fatherland.

"Then that glorious vision which has opened before so many men in their despair, disclosed itself: his eyes turned to America. You should never forget that from the first your country has been the refuge and the hope for the oppressed, the unfortunate, the discouraged of the whole world. In America he thought all roads were open, new roads were being made for human lives; that should become his country. One autumn he saw in a newspaper an advertisement that an American merchantman would sail from Belfast the

following spring and he turned to weaving and wove as never before to earn his passage money. At this time he lived on one shilling a week! And it seems that just now he undertook to make up his lack of knowledge of arithmetic. Some of you boys will doubtless greatly rejoice to hear that he was deficient in arithmetic! When spring came, with the earnings of his loom he walked across Scotland to the nearest port. When he reached Belfast every berth on the vessel had been taken: he asked to be allowed to sleep on the deck and was accepted as a passenger.

"He had now left Scotland to escape the loom—never to see Scotland again.

"And you see, he is beginning to come nearer.

"The vessel was called The Swift and

it took The Swift two months to make the passage. The port was to be Philadelphia but he seems to have been so impatient to set foot on the soil of the New World that he left the ship at New Castle, Delaware. He had borrowed from a fellow-passenger sufficient money to pay his expenses while walking to Philadelphia thirty-four miles away; and with this in his pocket and his fowling-piece on his shoulder he disappeared in the July forests of New Jersey. The first thing he did was to kill a red-headed wood-pecker which he declared to be the most beautiful bird he had ever seen.

"I do not find any word of his that he had ever killed a bird in Scotland during all his years of wandering. Now the first event that befell him in the

New World was to go straight to the American woods and kill what he declared to be the most beautiful bird he had ever seen. This might naturally have been to him a sign of his life-road. But he still stood blinded in his path, with not a plan, not an idea, of what he should be or could be: he had not yet read the handwriting on the wall within himself.

"His first years in the New World were more disastrous than any in Scotland, for always now he had the loneliness and dejection of a man who has rejected his own country and does not know that any other country will accept him. A fellow Scot, in Philadelphia, tried him at copper-plate printing. He quickly dropped this and went back to the old dreadful work of

weaving—he became an American weaver and went wandering through the forests of New Jersey as a peddler: at least peddling left him free to roam the forests. Next he tried teaching but he himself had been taken from school at the age of eleven and must prepare himself as one of his own beginners. He did not like this teaching experiment in New Jersey and migrated to Virginia. Virginia did not please him and he remigrated to Pennsylvania. There he tried one school after another in various places and finally settled on the outskirts of Philadelphia: here was his last school, for here was the turning point of his life.

"I wish I had time to describe for you the school-house with its surroundings, for the place is to us now a pic-

ture in the early American life of a great man—all such historic pictures are invaluable. Catch one glimpse of it: a neat stone school-house on a sloping green; with grey old white oaks growing around and rows of stripling poplars and scattered cedar trees. A road ran near and not far away was a little yellow-faced cottage where he lived. The yard was walled off from the road and there were seats within and rosebushes and plum trees and hop-vines. On one side hung a sign-board waving before a little roadside inn; on the other a blacksmith shop with its hammering. Not far off stood the edge of the great forest 'resounding with the songs of warblers.' In the depths of it was a favourite spot—a secret retreat for him in Nature.

"There then you see him: no longer a youth but still young; every road he had tried closed to him in America as in Scotland: not a doctor, not a minister, not a good poet, not a good flutist, not a good violinist, not a copper-plate engraver, not a willing weaver, not a willing peddler, not a willing school-teacher—none of these. No idea yet in him that he could ever be anything. A homeless self-exile, playing at lonely twilights on flute and violin the loved airs of rejected Scotland.

"Now it happened that near his school was a botanical garden owned by an American naturalist. The American, seeing the stranger cast down by his aimless life, offered him his portfolio of drawings and suggested that he try to draw a landscape,

draw the human figure. The Scotch weaver, the American school-teacher, tried and disastrously failed. As a final chance the American suggested that he try to draw a bird. He did try: he drew a bird. He drew again. He drew again and again. He kept on drawing. Nothing could keep him from drawing. And there at last the miracle of power and genius, so long restless in him and driving him aimlessly from one wrong thing to another wrong thing, disclosed itself as dwelling within his eyes and hands. His drawings were so true to life, that there could be no doubt: the road lay straight before him and ran clear through coming time toward eternal fame.

"All the experience which he had

been unconsciously storing as a peddler in Scotland now came back to him as guiding knowledge. The marvelous memory of his eye furnished its discipline: from early boyhood through sheer love he had unconsciously been studying birds in nature, and thus during all these wretched years had been laying up as a youth the foundation of his lifework as a man.

"Genius builds with lavish magnificence and inconceivable swiftness; and hardly had he succeeded with his first drawings before he had wrought out a monumental plan: to turn himself free as soon as possible into the vast, untravelled forest of the North American continent and draw and paint its birds. Other men, he said, would have to found the cities of the New

World and open up its country. His study was to be the lineaments of the owl and the plumage of the lark: he had cast in his lot with Nature's green magnificence untouched by man."

The lecturer paused, as a traveller instinctively stops to look around him at a pleasant turn of his road. It had, in truth, been a hard, crooked human road along which he had been leading his young listeners—a career choked at every step by inward and outward pressures. He had not failed to notice the change in every countenance, the brightening of every eye, as soon as his audience discovered that they were listening to a story, not of mere weaknesses and failures, but of the misfortunes and mistakes of a man, who at last stood out as truly great. This

hapless weaver, this aimless wanderer through the forests of two worlds, after all had success in him, strength in him, genius in him, fame in him! He was a hero. Henceforth they were alive with curiosity for the rest of the story which would bring the distant hero to Kentucky, to their Lexington.

The lecturer realised all this. But he had for some time been even more acutely aware that something wholly personal and extraordinary was taking place: one of the pupils of the high school was listening with an attention so absorbed and noticeable as to set him apart from all the rest. Just at what point this intense attention had been so aroused, had not been observed; but when once observed, there was no forgetting it: it filled the room, the

other listeners were merely grouped around it as accessories and helped to make its breathless picture.

The particularly interested pupil sat rather far back in the school-room, near a window—as though from a vain wish to jump out and be free. The morning light thus fell across his face: it was possible to watch its expression, its responsive change of light at each turn of the story. He seemed to hold some kind of leadership in the school: other pupils occasionally turned their faces to glance at him, to keep in touch with him: he did not return their glances—being their leader; or he had forgotten them for the story he was hearing.

The lecturer became convinced that what had more than once happened

to him before as a teacher was happening again: before him a young life was unexpectedly being solved—to its own wonderment and liberation, to its amazement and joy.

That perpetual miracle in nature—the contexture of the generations—the living taking the meaning of their lives from the dead! You stand beside some all but forgotten mound of human ashes; before you are arrayed a band of youths, unconsciously holding in their hands the unlighted torches of the future. You utter some word about the cold ashes and silently one of them walks forward to the ashes, lights his torch and goes his radiant way.

Thus the Geologist felt a graver responsibility resting on him—placed

there by one of them, more than by all of them: the words he was speaking might or might not give final direction to a whole career. He went on with his heroic narrative more glowingly, more guardedly:

"For a while he must keep on teaching in order to live: he taught all day, often after night, barely had time to swallow his meals, at the end of one term tells us he had as large a sum as fifteen dollars. Often he coloured his first drawings by candle light, drew and painted birds without knowing what they were. Drawing and painting by candle light!—but now he had within himself the risen sun of a splendid enthusiasm. That sun kindled his school-boys. They found out what he wanted and helped. One boy

brought him a large basketful of crows. Another caught a mouse in school and contributed that—the incident is worth quoting by showing that the boy preferred a mouse to a school-book.

"Take one instance of the energy with which he was now working and worked for the rest of his life: he wished to see Niagara Falls, and to lose no time while doing it he started out one autumn through the forest to walk to the Falls and back, a short trip for him of over twelve hundred miles. He reached home 'mid the deep snows of winter with no soles to his boots. What of that? On his way back he had shot two strange birds in the valley of the Hudson! For ten days—ten days, mind you!—he worked on a drawing of these and sent it with

a letter to Thomas Jefferson. You may as yet have thought of Jefferson only as one of America's earliest statesmen: begin now to think of him as one of the first American naturalists. And if you wish to read a courteous letter from an American President to a young stranger, go back to Jefferson's letter to the Scotch weaver who sent him the drawing of a jaybird.

"Pass rapidly over the next few years. He has made one trip from Maine down the Atlantic Seaboard to the South. He has returned and is starting out again to cover the vast interior basin of the Mississippi Valley: he is to begin at Pittsburgh and end at New Orleans.

"Now again you see that he is coming nearer—nearer to you here.

"Look then at this bold, splendid picture of him outlined against the background of early American life. All such pictures are part of our richest heritage.

"The scene is Pittsburgh. He has ransacked the winter woods for new species, he has found only sparrows and snow-birds. That was the year 1810; this is the year 1916—over a hundred years later in the history of our country. Gaze then upon this wild scene of the olden time, all such pictures are good for young eyes: it is the twenty-fourth of February: the river, swollen with the spring flood, is full of white masses of moving ice. A frail skiff puts off from shore and goes winding its way until it is lost to sight among the noble hills.

They warned him of his danger, urged him to take a rower, urged him not to go at all. Those who risked the passage of the river floated down on barges called Kentucky arks or in canoes hollowed each out of a single tree, usually the tulip tree, which you know is very common in our Kentucky woods. But to mention danger was to make him go to meet it. He would have no rower, had no money to hire one, had he wished one. He tells us what he had on board: in one end of the boat some biscuit and cheese, a bottle of cordial given him by a gentleman in Pittsburgh, his gun and trunk and overcoat; at the other end himself and his oars and a tin with which to bail out the skiff, if necessary, to keep it from sinking and also to use

as his drinking-cup to dip from the river.

"That February day—the swollen, rushing river, the masses of white ice—the solitary young boatman borne away to a new world on his great work: his heart expanding with excitement and joy as he headed toward the unexplored wilderness of the Mississippi Valley.

"Wondrous experiences were his: from the densely wooded shores there would reach him as he drifted down, the whistle of the red bird—those first spring notes so familiar and so welcome to us on mild days toward the last of February. Away off in dim forest valleys, between bold headlands, he saw the rising smoke of sugar camps. At other openings on the landscape,

grotesque log cabins looked like dog-houses under impending mighty mountains. His rapidly steered skiff passed flotillas of Kentucky arks heavily making their way southward, transporting men and women and children—the moving pioneers of the young nation: the first river merchant-marine of the new world: carrying horses and plows to clearings yet to be made for homesteads in the wilderness; transporting mill-stones for mills not yet built on any wilderness stream; bearing merchandise for the pioneers who in this way got their clothing until they could grow flax and weave to clothe themselves. Thus in the Alps of the Alleghenies he came upon the river peddlers of America as years before amid the Alps of Scotland he had come

upon the foot peddlers of his own land. On the river were floating caravans of men selling shawls and muslins. He boarded a number of these barges; as they approached a settlement, they blew a trumpet or a lonely horn on the great river stillness.

"The first night he drew in to shore some fifty miles down at a riverside hovel and tried to sleep on the only bed offered him—some corn-stalks. Unable to sleep, he got up before day and pushed out again into the river, listening to the hooting of the big-horned owl echoing away among the dawn-dark mountains, or to the strangely familiar crowing of cocks as they awoke the hen roosts about the first American settlements in the West.

"He records what to us now sounds

incredible, that on March fifth he saw a flock of parrokeets. Think of parrokeets on the Ohio River in March! Of nights it turned freezing cold and he drew liberally on his bottle of cordial for warmth. Once he encountered a storm of wind and hail and snow and rain, during which the river foamed and rolled like the sea and he had to make good use of his tin to keep the skiff bailed out till he could put in to shore. The call of wild turkeys enticed him now toward the shore of Indiana, now toward the shore of Kentucky, but before he reached either they had disappeared. His first night on the Kentucky shore he spent in the cabin of a squatter and heard him tell tales of bear-treeing and wildcat-hunting and wolf-baiting. All night wolves

howled in the forests near by and kept the dogs in an uproar; the region swarmed with wolves and wildcats 'black and brown.'

"On and on, until at last the skiff reached the rapids of the Ohio at Louisville and he stepped ashore and sold his frail saviour craft which, at starting, he had named the Ornithologist. The Kentuckian who bought it as the Ornithologist accepted the droll name as that of some Indian chief. He soon left Louisville, having sent his baggage on by wagon, and plunged into the Kentucky forest on his way to Lexington.

"And now, indeed, you see he is coming nearer.

"It was the twenty-fourth of March when he began his first trip southward

through the woods of Kentucky. Spring was on the way but had not yet passed northward. Nine-tenths of the Kentucky soil, he states, was then unbroken wilderness. The surface soil was deeper than now. The spring thaw had set in, permeating the rich loam. He describes his progress through it as like travelling through soft soap. The woods were bare as yet, though filled with pigeons and squirrels and wood-peckers. On everything he was using his marvellous eyes: looking for birds but looking at all human life, interested in the whole life of the forest. He mentions large corn fields and orchards of apple and of peach trees. Already he finds the high fences, characteristic of the Kentuckians. He turned aside once to visit a roosting place of the passenger pigeon.

"It was on March twenty-ninth that, emerging from the thick forest, he saw before him the little Western metropolis of the pioneers, the city of the forefathers of many of us here today—Lexington. I wish I could stop to describe to you the picture as he painted it: the town stretching along its low valley; a stream running through the valley and turning several mills—water mills in Lexington a hundred years ago! In the market-place which you now call Cheapside he saw the pillory and the stocks and he noted that the stocks were so arranged as to be serviceable for gallows: our Kentucky forefathers arranged that they should be conveniently hanged, if they deserved it, as a public spectacle of warning.

"On a country court day he saw a

thousand horses hitched around the courthouse square and in churchyards and in graveyards. He states that even then Kentucky horses were the most remarkable in the world.

"He makes no mention of one thing he must have seen, but was perhaps glad to forget—the weavers and the busy looms; for in those days Kentuckians were busy making good linen and good homespun, as in Paisley.

"He slept while in Lexington—this great unknown man—in a garret called Salter White's, wherever that was: and he shivered with cold, for you know we can have chill nights in April. He says that he had no firewood, it being scarce, the universal forest of firewood being half a mile away: this was like going hungry in a loft over a full baker-shop.

"And I must not omit one note of his on the Kentuckians themselves, which flashes a vivid historic light on their character. By this time he rightly considered that he had had adventures worth relating; but he declares that if he attempted to relate them to any Kentuckian, the Kentuckian at once interrupted him and insisted upon relating his own adventures as better worth while. Western civilization was of itself the one absorbing adventure to every man who had had his share in it.

"Here I must pause to intimate that Wilson all his life carried with him one bird—one vigourous and vociferous bird—a crow to pick. He picked it savagely with Louisville. But he had begun to pick it with Scotland. He had picked it with Great Britain and with New

Jersey and Virginia. In New England the feathers of the crow fairly flew. In truth, civilization never quite satisfied him; wild nature alone he found no fault with—there only was he happy and at home. He now picked his crow with Lexington. Afterward an indignant Kentuckian, quite in the good Kentucky way, attacked him and left the crow featherless—as regards Lexington.

"On the fourteenth day of April he departed from Lexington, moving southward through the forest to New Orleans. Scarcely yet had the woods begun to turn green. He notes merely the white blossoms of the redroot peeping through the withered leaves, and the buds of the buckeye. With those sharp eyes of his he observed that

wherever a hackberry tree had fallen, cattle had eaten the bark.

"And now we begin to take leave of him: he passes from our picture. We catch a glimpse of him standing on the perpendicular cliffs of solid limestone at the Kentucky River, green with a great number of uncommon plants and flowers—we catch a glimpse of him standing there, watching bank swallows and listening to the faint music of the boat horns in the deep romantic valley below, where the Kentucky arks, passing on their way southward, turned the corners of the verduous cliffs as the musical gondolas turn the corners of vine-hung Venice in the waters of the Adriatic.

"On and on southward; visiting a roosting-place of the passenger pigeon

which was reported to him as forty miles long: he counted ninety nests in one beech tree. We see him emerging upon the Kentucky barrens which were covered with vegetation and open for the sweep of the eye.

"Now, at last, he begins to meet the approach of spring in full tide: all Nature is bursting into leaf and blossom. No longer are the redbud and the dogwood and the sassafras conspicuous as its heralds. And now, overflowing the forest, advances the full-crested wave of bird-life up from the south, from the tropics. New and unknown species are everywhere before his eyes; their new melodies are in his ears; he is busy drawing, colouring, naming them for his work.

"So he passes out of our picture:

southward bound, encountering a cloud of parrakeets and pigeons, emerging from a cave with a handkerchief full of bats, swimming creeks, sleeping at night alone in the wilderness, his gun and pistol in his bosom. He vanishes from the forest scene, never from the memory of mankind.

"Let me tell you that he did not live to complete his work. Death overtook him, not a youth but still young; for, as a Roman of the heroic years deeply said: 'Death always finds those young who are still at work for the future of the world.'

"I told you I was going to speak to you of a boy's life. I asked you to fix your eyes upon it as a far-off human spark, barely glimmering through mist and fog but slowly, as the years passed,

getting stronger, growing brighter, always drawing nearer until it shone about you here as a great light and then passed on, leaving an eternal glory.

"I have done that.

"You saw a little fellow taken from school at about the age of eleven and put to hard work at weaving; now you see one of the world's great ornithologists, who had traversed some ten thousand miles of comparative wilderness—an imperishable figure, doing an imperishable deed. I love to think of him as being in the end what he most hated to be in the beginning—a weaver: he wove a vast, original tapestry of the bird-life of the American forest.

"As he passed southward from Lexington that distant April of 1810, encountering his first spring in the Ohio

valley with its myriads of birds, somewhere he discovered a new and beautiful species of American wood warbler and gave it a local habitation and a name.

"He called it the Kentucky Warbler.

"And now," the lecturer said, by way of climax, "would you not like to see a picture of that mighty hunter who lived in the great days of the young American republic and crossed Kentucky in the great days of the pioneers? And would you not also like to see a picture of the exquisite and only bird that bears the name of our State—the Kentucky Warbler?"

He passed over to them a portrait engraving of Alexander Wilson in the dress of a gentleman of his time, his fowling-piece on his forearm. And

along with this he delivered to them a life-like, a singing portrait, of the warbler, painted by a great American animal painter and bird painter—Fuertes.





III

THE FOREST

IT was the first day of vacation.

Schools, if you were not through with them, had now become empty, closed, silent buildings, stripped of authority to imprison and bedevil you and then mark you discreditably because you righteously rebelled against being imprisoned and bedeviled. They could safely be left to dust and cobwebs within and to any weeds that might lodge and sprout outside—the more the

better. You stood on the spring edge of the long, free, careless summer and could look unconcernedly across at the distant autumn edge. Then as the woods, now in their first full green, were beginning to turn dry and yellow, the powerless buildings would again become tyrannical schools.

But if you had finished high school, on this first day of vacation you were on the Boy's Common: schools behind you, the world of business around you, ahead of you ambitious college or the stately University. Webster had been turned loose on the Boy's Common.

The family were at breakfast. Every breakfast in the cottage was much the same breakfast: routine is the peace of the roadless. Existence there through-

out the year was three hundred and sixty-five times more or less like itself. The earth meantime did change for the signs of the zodiac: the cottage changed also, but had a zodiac of its own. Thus, when the planet was in the sign of *Capricornus,* the cottage on a morning had fried perch for breakfast, as a sign that it was in *Pisces;* when earth was in *Gemini,* the family might have a steak which showed that it was in *Taurus*—or that *Taurus* was in the family.

There was always hot meat of one kind and hot bread of two kinds and hot coffee of any kind. If Webster's father upon entering the breakfast room had not seen a dish before him to carve or apportion, the shock could not have been greater, had he found

lying on his folded napkin an enclosure from the bank notifying him that he had been discharged for having made the figure four instead of the figure two.

He sat squarely facing the table as long as his own portion of the meat lasted, meantime eating rapidly and bending over to glance at his paper which lay flat beside his coffee cup. With the final morsel of meat he turned sidewise and sat cross-legged, with his paper held before his face as a screen—notification that he would rather not talk at the moment, unless they preferred. . . . If they showed that they did prefer, he still had means to discourage their preference. Now and then he reached around toward his plate and groped for the remaining crumbs of bread, or hooked his fore-

finger in the handle of his cup and conveyed it behind the paper.

Webster's mother, busied with service at the tray, commenced her breakfast after the others. She talked to her husband until he interposed his newspaper. Then she unconsciously lowered her voice and addressed remarks to the children. Occasionally she tried to arrange their dissensions.

A satirist of human life, studying Webster's father and mother at the head and foot of the table—symbol at once of their opposition and conjunction—a satirist, who for his own amusement turns life into pictures of something else, might have described their bodily and pictorial relation as that of a large, soft deep-dished pudding

to a well trimmed mutton chop. Their minds he would possibly have imagined as two south winds moving along, side by side; whatever else they blew against, they could not possibly blow against each other.

On this fine June morning, the first day of his vacation, Webster was late for breakfast. He arranged to be late. From his bathroom-bedroom he could hear the family with their usual morning talk, Elinor's shrill chatter predominating. When her chatter ceased he would know that she had satisfied her whimsical appetite and had slipped from her chair, impatient either to get to the front porch with its creaky rocking-chair or to dart out the gate to other little girls in the block; restlessly seeking some adventure else-

where if none should pass before her eyes at home.

He waited till she should go; there was something especial to speak of with his father and he did not wish this to be spoiled by Elinor's interference and ridicule.

When she was gone he went in to breakfast.

"Well, my son, how are you going to spend your first day of vacation?" his father inquired, helping him to his portion and not particularly noticing his own question.

"I thought I'd go over into the woods," Webster replied.

An unfavourable silence followed this announcement. That old stubborn controversy about the woods! . . .

"Father," asked Webster, with his

eyes on his plate, "did you ever see the Kentucky warbler?"

Webster's father looked over the top of the wood-pulp screen. His face had a somewhat vacant expression. He waited. Finally he said:

"My son, I believe you asked me a question: I shall have to ask you to repeat your question; I may be losing my hearing or I may be losing my mind. You asked me—?"

Webster, in the same deliberate tone, repeated his question:

"Did you ever see the Kentucky warbler?"

Webster's father looked over his spectacles at Webster's mother as with the air of an appeal for guidance:

"My dear, your son asks me, if I

understand him, whether I have ever seen a Kentucky wooden war horse?"

He was not above fun-making and it seemed to him that the occasion called for it.

Webster's mother explained:

"One of the professors from the University lectured to them in April about birds. His head has been full of birds ever since: I shouldn't wonder if his dreams have been full of them." She looked at Webster not without ineradicable tenderness and pride; she could not quite have explained the pride, she could have explained the tenderness.

Now the truth of the matter was that since that memorable morning of the April talk at high school, she had been hearing from Webster re-

peatedly on that subject. He had told her of the lecture immediately upon reaching home; she had never seen him so wrought up. And from that time he had upon occasion plied her with questions: as to what she knew of birds when she lived in the country. She had to tell him that she knew very little; everybody identified the several species that preyed upon fruit and berries and young chickens; she named these readily enough. She had never heard of a bird called the Kentucky warbler. And she had never heard of Alexander Wilson.

All this she had duly narrated to Webster's father—greatly to his dejection. A bank officer with a solitary son, now graduated from high school, going after bird-nests—that was a

prospect before such a father! He had shaken his head in silence that more than spoke.

"I told him," Webster's mother had concluded, "that the only Wilsons worth knowing in Kentucky were the horse-people Wilsons: of course we know *them*. It has been amusing to watch Elinor. Whenever Webster has begun about birds, if she has overheard him, she has made it convenient to settle somewhere near and listen. She would break in and stop his questions, but then there would be no more entertainment for her. She has been a study."

Thus Webster's father was not so ill-informed as he now appeared. In return for the information from Webster's mother, apparently for the first

time imparted, he looked at his son with an expression which plainly meant that as a speculation the latter was becoming a graver risk.

"No, my son," he said, "I have never met your forest friend. I am merely a Kentucky bank warbler. One who did his warbling years ago. There is some *war* left in me. I suppose there will always be *war* left in me, but there isn't any *war*-ble. I warbled one distant solitary spring to your mother. She replied beautifully in kind and lavishly in degree. We made a nest and had a hatching. Since then the male bird has been trying—not to escape the consequences of his song—but to meet his notes like a man. I have never stumbled upon your forest friend."

silence;

"A living naturalist says the notes may be:

" '*Toodle toodle toodle.*' "

Silence at the table still more deep. Webster broke it:

"Another naturalist describes the bird as saying:

" '*Ter-wheeter wheeter wheeter wheeter wheeter.*' "

The silence! Webster continued:

"Another naturalist thinks the song is:

" '*Che che che peery peery peery.*' "

Webster's father raised his eyebrows —he had no hair to raise—at Webster's mother: a sign that their graduate was beginning to celebrate his vacation.

"My son," he said, "when I was a little fellow in school, one of the reading lessons was a poem called 'Try,

Try Again.' Perhaps the bird is working along that line."

"Thomas Jefferson followed a bird for hours in the woods," said Webster, with dignity: he somehow felt rebuked. "And for twenty years he tried to catch sight of another."

"Don't let me come between you and Thomas Jefferson," said Webster's father, waving his hand toward his son in protest. "God forbid that I should come between any two such persons as Daniel Webster and Thomas Jefferson!"

"The government at Washington," observed Webster stoutly, "is behind the Kentucky warbler."

"Then, my son, I advise you to get behind the Government."

The rusty bell at the little front door

went off with a sound like the whirr of a frightened prairie chicken. The breakfast maid, also the cook, also the maid of all work, also a unit of the standardised population of disservice and discontent, entered and pushed a bill at Webster's father.

"The butcher," she announced with sullen gratification, "He's waiting."

As Webster's father left the table, he tapped his son affectionately on the head with his paper: "You follow the bird, my boy; and follow Thomas Jefferson, if you can. The butcher follows me."

Webster's mother sat watching him. He had begun to get his lunch ready. He held the bottom-half of a long, slender roll, which might have served as a miniature model for an old-time

Kentucky river-ark; and with his knife, grasped like an oar, he was lining the inside with some highly specialised yellow substance. She deplored his awkwardness and fought his independence.

"Let me put up your lunch for you, my son!"

"I'll put it up."

He was not to be cheated out of that fresh sensation of pleasure which comes to the male, young or old, who tries to cook in camp, to fry, to boil, to season, or to serve things edible.

Webster pulled out of his pocket a crumpled piece of brown paper and smoothed it out on the table cloth. It showed butcher stains.

Webster's mother protested.

"My son! Take a napkin! Take this clean napkin for your lunch!"

"I like this paper."

The idea of being in the forest and unrolling his lunch from a napkin: what would Wilson have thought? Elinor, being "nice," always rolled her lunch in a napkin.

"But you will be hungry: let me get you some preserves!"

"Not anything sweet." Elinor always had preserves. He rolled his lunch roughly and thrust it, butcher-stains and all, into his pocket. His mother was exasperated and distressed.

"My son, your lunch will come loose in your pocket: I'll get you a string."

"I don't want a string." Elinor tied everything. Girls tied; boys buttoned. The difference between men and women was strings.

"But you'll get the grease on you,

Webster! It will run down your legs!"

"Very well, then, I'll have greasy legs. Why not?"

She followed him out to the porch. Her character lacked capacity of initiative. She waited for him to be old enough to take some initiative; then she would stand by him.

"Don't go too far," she said tenderly, "and you ought to have some of your friends to go with you, some of the boys from school."

"They can't go today. Nobody can go today. Anybody would be in the way today."

He said this to himself.

She watched him from the porch and called: "Don't stay too late."

Webster walked quickly to the main

corner of the block—Jenny's corner. On this first morning of being through with school and of feeling more like a man free to do as he pleased, Jenny for that reason became more important—he must see her before starting. Heretofore the pleasure of being with Jenny had definitely depended upon what Jenny might do; this morning the idea was beginning to be Jenny herself.

She was in her trumpet-vine arbour, the roof of which was already sun-dried. The shaded sides were still dew-wet. She bounded across to him, very exquisite in her light blue frock with broad, fresh white ribbons in her light-brown hair: healthy, docile, joyous, with innocent blue eyes and the complexion of apple blossoms.

"Where are you going?" she asked

in a voice which implied that the day would be as pleasant, no matter where he went: nevertheless she had no thought of appearing indifferent to him.

He told her.

"What are you going into the woods for?" she inquired, with little dancing movements of her feet on the yard grass in irrepressible health and joy and with no especial interest in his reply.

He told her.

"Could *you* go?" He very well knew she could not and merely yielded to an impulse to express himself: he was offering to ruin the day for her.

"They wouldn't let me," said Jenny, apparently not disappointed at being thus kept at home.

He sought to make the best of his disappointment.

"Even if you could go, I am afraid you never would be quiet, Jenny."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't," Jenny replied, responsive to every suggestion.

He lingered, tenderly disturbed by her: the roots of the future were growing in him this morning. He was changing, he was changing *her:* there was an outreaching of his nature to draw her into the future alongside him.

Jenny suddenly stopped dancing and came closer to the fence, having all at once become more conscious of Webster, standing there as he had never stood before, looking at her as he had never looked. Her nature was of yielding sweetness, clasping trust. She glanced around the cottage windows: the situation was very exposed. Webster glanced at the cottage windows:

the situation did not appear in the least exposed. Her eyes became more round with an idea:

"Are you coming back this way?"

"I *will* come back this way."

Jenny danced away from the fence, laughing excitedly: "Will it be late?"

"I can *make* it late?"

Webster climbed the fence of the forest under the foliage of a big tree of some unknown kind and descended waist-deep into the foliage of a weed with a leaf as big as an elephant's ear: it had a beautiful trumpet-shaped white and purple flower. He wished he knew what it was: on the very edge of the forest, at his very first step, he had sunk waist-deep into ignorance. Then he waded through the rank night-

shade and stepped out upon the grass of the woods—the green carpet of thick turf, Kentucky bluegrass.

At last he was there under those softly waving trees which summer after summer he had watched from the porch and windows: long they had called to him and now he had answered their call.

But the disappointment! As he had looked at the forest across the distance, the tree-tops had made an unbroken billowy line of green along the blue horizon, continuous like the waves of the sea as he imagined the sea. Somewhere under that forest roof he had taken it for granted that there would be thick undergrowth, wild spots for shy singing nesting birds. The disappointment! The trees stood ten or twenty or thirty feet apart. The long-

est boughs barely touched each other, their lowest sometimes hung forty or fifty feet in the air. He did not see a tree whose branches he could reach with his upstretched arm. The sun shone everywhere under them every bright day and the grass grew thick up to their trunks.

Another disappointment! The wood was small. He walked to the middle of it and from there could see to its edge on each of its four sides. On one side was a field of yellow grain—what the grain was he did not know—ignorance again. On the side opposite this was a field of green grain—what he did not know. Straight ahead of him as he looked through the trees, he could see an open paddock on which the sunlight fell in a blazing sheen; it

turned to silver the white flanks of some calves and made soft gold of the coats of grazing thoroughbreds. Beyond the paddock he could see stables and sheds and beyond these a farmhouse: he could faintly hear the cackle of barnyard poultry.

He stood in bluegrass pasture—once Kentucky wilderness. It was like an exquisite natural park. As he had skirmished toward the country along turnpikes with school-mates or other friends during his life, often his eyes had been drawn toward these world-famous bluegrass pastures. Now he was in one; and it was here that he had come to look for the warbler which haunts the secret forest solitudes!

He sat down under a big tree with a feeling of how foolish he had been.

This was again followed by an overwhelming sense of his ignorance.

He did not know the kind of tree he sat under nor of any other that stood far or near. These were such as sugar maple and red oak and white oak and black ash and white ash and black walnut and white walnut—rarely white walnut—and hickory and locust and elm and a few haws: he did recognise a locust tree but then a locust tree grew in Jenny's yard! All around him weeds and wild flowers and other grasses sprang up out of the bluegrass: he did not know them.

There was one tree he curiously looked around for, positive that he should not be blind to it if fortunate enough to set his eyes on one—the coffee tree. That is, he felt sure he'd

recognise it if it yielded coffee ready to drink, of which never in his life had they given him enough. Not once throughout his long troubled experience as to being fed had he been allowed as much coffee as he craved. Once, when younger, he had heard some one say that the only tree in all the American forest that bore the name of Kentucky was the Kentucky coffee tree; and he had instantly conceived a desire to pay a visit in secret to that corner of the woods. To take his cup and a few lumps of sugar and sit under the boughs and catch the coffee as it dripped down. . . . No one to hold him back . . . as much as he wanted at last. . . .! The Kentucky coffee tree—his favourite in Nature!

He said to himself, looking all

round him, that he had the outdoor loneliness and blindness of Silas Marner this wonderful morning.

Propped against the tree he sat still a while, thinking of the long day before him and of how he should spend it in this thin empty pasture, abandoned by the wild creatures. But as he deliberated, suddenly and then more and more he awoke to things going on around him.

A few feet away and on a level with his eyes a little fellow descended from high over-head. A little green gymnast trying to reach the ground by means of his own rope which he manufactured out of his body as he came down. How could he do it? How had he learned the very first time to make the rope strong enough to bear his

weight instead of its giving way and letting him drop? Something seized one of Webster's ankles with a pair of small jaws like pincers and reminded him that his foot was in the way: it had better move on. A black ant suddenly rushed angrily over his knee. A cricket leaped in the grass. One autumn one of them had started its song behind the wainscoting, Elinor had pushed her toe against the woodwork and silenced it. A few feet away a bunch of white clover blossomed: a honey bee was searching it. Webster found on the back of one of his hands, which was pressed against the grass, a tiny crimson coach — a mere dot of a crimson coach being moved along he could not see how. The colour was most gorgeous and the material of the finest velvet. He let it

go on its way across his hand wither-soever it might be journeying. Directly opposite his eyes, some forty feet from the ground, was a round hole in a rotten tree-trunk. Webster wondered whether a bird ever pecked a square hole in anything. Suddenly from behind him a red-headed bird flew to the dead tree-trunk and alighted near the hole: he recognised the wood-pecker. And he remembered that this was the first bird Wilson had killed that first day he entered the American forest: he was glad that it was the first *he* encountered! No sooner had the wood-pecker alighted than the head of another bird appeared at the hole and the wood-pecker took to his heels—to his wings. Webster wished he had known what this other bird was: it had a black

band across its chest and wore a speckled jacket and a dull reddish cap on the back of its head. A disturbance reached him from a nearby tree-top, a wailing voice, a gulping sound, as if something up there were sick and full of suffering and were trying to take its medicine. He watched the spot and presently a crow flew out of the thick leaves: the crow's family seemed not in good health. A ground squirrel jumped to the end of a rotting log some yards away but at sight of him shrieked and darted in again. The whole pasture was alive.

Webster had all this time become conscious that another sound had been reaching his ear at regular intervals from the high branches of the trees, first in one place and then in another.

His eyes had followed the voice but he could see no bird. The sound was like this:

Se—u—re?

That was the first half of the song—a question. A few moments later the other half followed, perhaps from another tree—the answer:

Se—u—u.

Here was a mystery: what was the bird? Could it be the bluebird!—his ignorance again, the comicality of his ignorance! Webster had never seen or heard a bluebird. He recalled what the professor had told them—that Alexander Wilson had written the first poem on the American bluebird, perhaps still the best poem; and he had given them the poem to memorise if they liked, saying that they might not think it

good poetry, but at least it was the poetry of a man who thought he could criticise Robert Burns! Webster had memorised the verses and as he now searched the forest boughs for this invisible bluebird, he repeated to himself some of Wilson's lines:

"When all the gay scenes of summer are o'er
And autumn slow enters so silent and sallow
And millions of warblers that charmed us before
Have fled in the train of the sun-seeking swallow;
The bluebird, forsaken, but true to his home
Still lingers and looks for a milder tomorrow
Till forced by the horrors of winter to roam,
He sings his adieu in a lone note of sorrow."

Again that long fine strain cast far out upon the air like a silken reel:

Se—u—re? Se—u—u.

Or could it be a woodcock?

He got up by and bye and walked toward the field of yellow grain on one side of the pasture. Before he was halfway he stopped, arrested by a wonderful sound: from the top rail of the fence before him, separating the pasture from the grain, came a loud ringing whistle. It was Bobwhite! Boys at school sometimes whistled "bobwhite." He knew this bird because he had seen him hanging amid snow and ice and holly boughs outside meat shops about Christmas time. Here now was the summer song: in it the green of the woods, the gold of the grain, the far brave clearness of the June sky.

He tipped forward, not because his feet made any noise. Once again, nearer, that marvellous music rang past him, echoing on into the woods. Then

it ceased; and as Webster approached the field fence what he saw was a rabbit watching him over the grass tops until with long soft leaps it escaped through the fence to the safety of the field.

For a while he remained leaning on this fence and looking out across the coming harvest. Twenty yards away a clump of alders was in bloom: some bird was singing out there joyously. It made a *che che che* sound, also; but its colour was brown.

The idea occurred to Webster that he would recross the pasture to the field on the other side and go on to the turnpike: one ran there, for he heard vehicles passing. He would make inquiry about some piece of forest further from the city. He remembered again what the professor told them:

"Some of you this summer during your vacation may go out to some nearby strip of woods—what little is left of the old forest—in quest of the warbler. Seek the wildest spots you can find. The Kentucky bluegrass landscape is thin and tame now, but there are places of thick undergrowth where the bird still spends his Kentucky summer. Shall I give you my own experience as to where I found him when a boy half a century ago? On my father's farm there was a woodland pasture. The land dipped there into a marshy hollow. In this hollow was a stock pond. Around the edges of the pond grew young cane. It was always low because the cattle browsed it. The highest stalks were scarcely five feet. On the edge of the canebrake

a thicket of papaw and blackberry vines added rankness and forest secrecy. It was here I discovered him. The pale green and yellow of his plumage blent with the pale green and yellow of the leaves and stalks. But it was many years before I knew that the bird I had found was the Kentucky warbler. If I had only known it when I was a boy!"

When Webster reached the turnpike and looked up and down, no one was in sight. He sat on the fence and waited. By and bye, coming in from the country, a spring wagon appeared. Curious projections stuck out from the top and sides of boxes in the wagon. When it drew nearer Webster saw poultry being taken to market. He

looked at the driver but let him pass unaccosted: there would be little use in applying for information about warblers at headquarters for broilers.

Next from the direction of the city he saw coming a splendid open carriage drawn by a splendid horse and driven by a very pompous coloured coachman in livery. An aristocratic old lady sat in the carriage, shielding her face from the dazzling sunlight with a rich parasol. She leaned out and looked curiously at Webster.

"Suydam," she called out to her coachman with a voice that had the faded sweetness of faded rose leaves, "did you notice that remarkable boy? He looked as though he would have liked to drive with me out into the country. I wish I had invited him to do so."

A milk cart followed with a great noise of tin cans. With milk carts Webster felt somewhat at home: it was often his business to receive the family milk. As the cart was passing, he motioned for the milkman to stop. Perhaps all milkmen stop at any sign: there may be an order: Webster called out with a good deal of hesitation:

"Do you know of a woods further out full of bushes and thickets?"

The milkman gave a little flap of the rein to his horse:

"What's the matter with *you?*" he said with patient forbearance:

Finally Webster saw creeping down the turnpike toward him an empty wagon-bed drawn by a yoke of oxen. A good-natured young negro man sat sideways on the wagon-tongue, smok-

ing. Webster halted him by a gesture and a voice of command:

"Do you know of a bushy woods further out?"

Any negro enjoys being questioned because he enjoys not answering questions. Most of all he enjoys any puzzling exercise of his mother wit.

"A bushy woods?"

"Yes, a bushy woods."

"What do you want with a bushy woods?"

"I want to find where there is one."

The negro hesitated: "there's a bushy woods about four miles out."

"Is it on the pike?"

"On the pike! Did you ever see a bushy woods on the pike? It's *beside* the pike."

"Right side or left side?"

"Depends which way you're going. Right side if you are going out, left side if you're coming in."

"You say it's four miles out?"

"You pass the three mile post and then you go a little further."

"Are there any birds in it?"

"Birds? There's owls in it. There's coons in it."

"Do you know a young canebrake when you see one?"

"I know an old hempbrake when I see one."

Webster enjoyed his new authority in holding up his negro and questioning him about a forest. And it seemed to him that the moment had come when it was right to use money if you had it, horns or no horns. He pulled out a dime. The negro, too surprised to

speak, came across and received it. He declined to express thanks but felt disposed to show that he had earned the money by repeating a piece of information:

"It's four miles out."

"Is there much of it?"

"Much of it? Much as you want."

"Do you live in it?"

"No, I don't live in it: I live in a house."

He had retaken his seat on the wagon-tongue.

"What kind of pipe stem is that you are using?"

"What kind? It's a cane pipe stem."

"Where did you get the cane?"

"Where did I get it? I got it in the woods."

"Then there *is* young cane growing in the woods?"

"Who said there wasn't?"

Webster, beginning this morning to use his eyes, took notice of something which greatly interested him as the wagon moved slowly off down the pike: strands of hemp clung to it here and there like a dry hanging moss. The geologist had told them that his own boyhood lay far back in the era of great Kentucky hemp-raising. Much of the hemp was broken in March, the month of high winds. As the hemp-breakers busily shook out their handfuls while separating the fibre from the shard, strands were carried away on the roaring gales, lodging against stubble and stumps and fences of the fields or blown further on into the pastures. Later when it was baled and hauled in, other filaments were

caught on the rafters and shingles of hemp-houses and barns. Thus when in April the northward migration of birds reached Kentucky, this material was everywhere ready and plentiful, and the Baltimore orioles on the blue-grass plateau built their long hanging nests of Kentucky hemp.

Webster, sitting on the fence and thinking of this, meantime laid his plans for the larger adventure of the following day: the clue he sought had unexpectedly been found: he would go out to the place where young cane grew: there he might have a real chance at the warbler.

This being settled to his satisfaction, he hurried impatiently back to his woodland pasture. It had seemed empty of living creatures when he entered

it; soon it had revealed itself as a whole teeming world. The mere green carpet of the woods was one vast birthplace and nursery, concert hall, playground, battlefield, slaughter-pen, cemetery.

"But my ignorance!" he complained. "I have good strong eyes, but all these years they have been required to look at dead maps, dead books, dead pencils and figures, dead everything: not once in all that time have they been trained upon the study of a living object."

His ears were as ignorant as his eyes: he had not been educated to hear and to know what he heard. Innumerable strange sounds high and low beat incessantly on them—wave upon wave of louder and fainter melodies, the

summer music of the intent and earnest earth. And everywhere what fragrances! The tonic woody smells! Each deep breath he drew laved his lungs with sun-clean, leaf-sweet atmosphere. Hour after hour of this until his whole body and being—sight, smell, hearing, mind and spirit—became steeped in the forest joyousness.

Now it was alone in the June woods that long bright afternoon that Webster took final account of the last wonderful things the geologist had told them that memorable morning. He pondered those sayings as best he could, made out of them what he could:

"I am not afraid to trust you, the young, with big ideas which will lift your minds as on strong wings and carry them

swiftly and far through time and space. If you are taught to look for great things early in life, you will early learn how to find great things; and the things you love to find will be the things you will desire and try to do. I wish not to give you a single trivial, mean weak thought."

* * * * * * *

"The Kentucky warbler for over a hundred years has worn the name of the State and has carried it all over the world—leading the students of bird life to form some image of a far country and to fix their thoughts at least for some brief moment on this same beautiful spot of the world's surface. As long as he remains in the forests of the earth, he will keep the name of Kentucky alive though all else it once meant shall have perished and been forgotten. He is thus, as nearly as any-

thing in Nature can be, its winged world-wide emblem, ever young as each spring is young, as the green of the woods is young."

* * * * * * *

"Study the warbler while you may: how long he will inhabit the Kentucky forest no one can tell. As civilisation advances upon the forest, the wild species retreat; when the forest falls, the wild species are gone. Every human generation during these centuries has a last look at many things in Nature. No one will ever see them again: Nature can never find what she has once lost: if it is gone, it is gone forever. What Wilson records he saw of bird life in Kentucky a hundred years ago reads to us now as fables of the marvellous, of the incredible. Were he the sole witness, some of us might think

him to be a lying witness. Let me tell you that I in my boyhood—half a century later than Wilson's visit to Kentucky —beheld things that you will hardly believe. The vast oak forest of Kentucky was what attracted the passenger pigeon. In the autumn when acorns were ripe but not yet fallen, the pigeons filled the trees at times and places, eating them from the cups. Walking quietly some sunny afternoon through the bluegrass pastures, you might approach an oak and see nothing but the tree itself, thick boughs with the afternoon sunlight sparkling on the leaves along one side. As you drew nearer, all at once, as if some violent explosion had taken place within the tree, a blue smoke-like cloud burst out all around the tree-top—the simultaneous explosive flight of the frightened pigeons. Or all night

long there might be wind and rain and the swishing of boughs and the tapping of loosened leaves against the window panes; and when you stepped out of doors next morning, it had suddenly become clear and cold. Walking out into the open and looking up at the clear sky you might see this: an arch of pigeons breast by breast, wing-tip to wing-tip, high up in the air as the wild geese fly, slowly moving southward. You could not see the end of the arch on one horizon or the other: the whole firmament was spanned by that mighty arch of pigeons flying south from the sudden cold. Not all the forces in Nature can ever restore that morning sunlit arch of pigeons flying south. The distant time may come, or a nearer, when the Kentucky warbler will have vanished like the wild pigeon:

then any story of him will be as one of the ancient fables of bird life."

* * * * * * *

"The rocks of the earth are the one flooring on which every thing develops its story, then either disappears upon the stillness of the earth's atmosphere or sinks toward the silence of its rocks. Of the myriad forms of life on the earth the bird has always been the one thing nearest to what we call the higher life of the human species.

"It is the form and flight of the bird alone that has given man at last the mastery of the atmosphere. Without the bird as a living model we have not the slightest reason to believe that he could have ever learned the mechanism of flight. Now it is the flight of the bird, studied under the American sky, that has given the

nations the war engine that will perhaps rule the destiny of the human race henceforth. The form of the bird will fly before our autumn-brown American armies as they cross the sea—leading them as the symbol of their victory. When they lie along the trenches of France as thick as fallen brown autumn leaves in woodland hollows, it will be the flight of bird-like emblems of destruction that will guide them like hurricane-rushing leaves as they sweep toward their evil enemy."

* * * * * * *

"Through all ages the flight of the bird alone has been the interpreter of the human spirit. The living, standing on the earth and seeing the souls of their dead pass beyond their knowledge, have fixed upon the bird as the symbol of their faith.

When you are old enough, if not already, to know your Shakespeare, you will find in one line of one of his plays the whole vast human farewell of the living to the dead: they are the words of Horatio to Hamlet, his dying prince: 'the flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.'"

* * * * * * *

"As far as we geologists know, this is the morning of the planet. Not its dawn but somewhere near its sunrise. The bird music we hear in these human ages are morning songs. Back of that morning stretches the earth's long dawn; and the rocks tell us that thrushes were singing in the green forests of the earth millions of years before man had been moulded of the dust and had awakened and begun to listen to them. Thus bird music which seems to us so fresh is the

oldest music of the earth—millions of years older than man's. And yet all this is still but a morning song. The earth is young, the birds are young, man is young—all young together at the morning of the earth's geologic day. What the evening will be we do not know. It is possible that the birds will be singing their evening song to the earth and man already have vanished millions of years before."

"Many questions vex us: all others lead to one: when man vanishes, does he pass into the stillness of the earth's atmosphere and sink toward the stillness of its rocks like every other species? He answers with his faith: that his spirit is here he knows not why, but takes flight from it he knows not how or whither. Only, faith discloses to him one picture: the snowy

pinion folded and at rest in the Final Places."

* * * * * * *

That long sunny afternoon in the June woods! The shadows of the trees slowly lengthened eastward. The sun sank below the forest boughs and shot its long lances against the tree trunks. It made a straight path of gold, deeper gold, across the yellow grain. The sounds of life died away, the atmosphere grew sweeter with the odours of leaves and grasses and blossoms.

Webster recrossed the woods as he had entered it, waded through the nightshade and climbed the fence under the dark tree.

It was twilight when he entered the City.

As he passed her yard, Jenny bounded across to him joyous, innocent, tender, in a white frock with fresh blue ribbons in her brown hair.

"Did you find him?" she asked, her happiness not depending on his answer.

"It was not the right place. Tomorrow I am going out further into the country to a better place."

"The humming-bird has been here," Jenny announced with an air of saying that she had been more successful as a naturalist.

He made no reply: as the veteran observer of a day, he had somewhat outgrown the trumpet-vine arbour and the ruby-throat.

He lingered close to the fence. Jenny lingered. He moved off, disappointed but devoid of speech.

"Come back!" Jenny whispered, with reproach and vexation.

It was the first invitation. It was the first acceptance of an invitation. There would have been a second acceptance but the invitation was not there to accept.

When Webster turned in at his home gate, everything was just as he had foreseen: his father sat on one side of the porch, smoking the one daily cigar; his mother faced him from the opposite side, slowly rocking. Elinor crouched on the top step between them: he would have to walk around her or over her.

His father laughed heartily as he sauntered up.

"Well, my son, where is your game bag? What have you brought us for breakfast?"

Webster looked crestfallen: he returned empty-handed but not empty-minded: he had had a great rich day; they thought it an idle wasted one.

"Some of the boys have been here for you," said his mother. "They left word you must be certain to meet them, in the morning for the game. Freshen yourself up and I'll give you your supper."

Elinor said nothing—a bad sign with her. She sat with her sharp little chin resting on her palms and with her eyes on him with calculating secrecy. He stepped around her.

His room had never seemed so cramped after those hours in the woods under the open sky. The whole cottage seemed so unnatural, every-

thing in the City so unnatural, after that day in the forest.

At supper he had not much to say; his mother talked to him:

"I put my berries away to eat with you for company." They ate their berries together.

He felt tired and said he would go to bed. His room was darkened when he returned to it; he felt sure he had left his lamp burning; someone had been in it. He lighted his lamp again.

As he started toward his window to close the shutters, his eye caught sight of an object hanging from the window sash. A paper was pinned around it. The handwriting was Elinor's. It was a bluejay, brought down by a lucky stone from some cottager's hand. Webster read Elinor's message for him:

"Your favourite Kentucky Warbler,
From your old friend,
Thomas Jefferson."

He sat on the side of his bed. The sights and sounds and fragrances of the pasture were all through him; the sunlight warmed his blood still, the young blood of perfect health.

He turned in for the night and sleep drew him away at once from reality. And some time during the night he awoke out of his sleep to the reality of a great dream.



IV

THE BIRD

IT was in the depths of a wonderful forest, green with summer and hoary with age. He was sitting on the ground in a small open space. No path led to this or away from it, but all around him grew grasses and plants which would be natural coverts for wild creatures. No human tread had ever crushed those plants.

The soft vivid light resting on the woods was not morning-light nor evening-light: it was clear light without the

hours. Yet the time must have been near noonday; for as Webster looked straight up toward the unseen sky, barred from his eyes by the forest roof of leaves, slender beams of sunlight filtered perpendicularly down, growing mistier as they descended until they could be traced no longer even as luminous vapour; no palest radiance from them reached the grass.

He could not see far in any direction. At the edge of the open space where he sat, fallen rotten trees lay amid the standing live ones—parents, grandparents, great-grandparents of the rising forest, passing back into the soil of the planet toward the rocks.

Strange as was the spot, stranger was Webster to himself and did not know what had changed him. It

seemed that for the first time in his life his eyes were fully opened; never had he seen with such vision; and his feeling was so deep, so intense. The whole scene was enchantment. It was more than reality. *He* was more than reality. The singing of birds far away — it was so crystal sweet, yet he could see none. A few yards from him a rivulet made its way from somewhere to somewhere. He could trace its course by the growth of plants which crowded its banks and covered it with their leaves.

Expectancy weighed heavily on him. He was there for a purpose but could not say what the purpose was.

All at once as his eyes were fixed on the low, green thicket opposite him, he saw that it was shaken; something was

on its way to him. He watched the top of the thicket being parted to the right and to the left. With a great leaping of his heart he waited, motionless where he sat on the grass. What creature could be coming? Then he saw just within the edge of the thicket a curious piece of head-gear—he had no knowledge of any such hat. Then he saw a gun barrel. Then the hand and forearm of a man was thrust forward and it pushed the underbrush aside; and then there stepped forth into the open the figure of a hunter, lean, vigorous, tall, athletic. The hunter stepped out with a bold stride or two and stopped and glanced eagerly around with an air of one in a search; he discovered Webster and with a look of relief stood still and smiled.

There could be no mistake. Webster held imprinted on memory from a picture those features, those all-seeing eyes; it was Wilson—weaver lad of Paisley, wandering peddler youth of the grey Scotch mountains, violinist, flutist, the poet who had burned his poem standing in the public cross, the exile, the school teacher for whom the boy caught the mouse, the failure who sent the drawing to Thomas Jefferson, the bold figure in the skiff drifting down the Ohio—the naturalist plunging into the Kentucky wilderness and walking to Lexington and shivering in White's garret—the great American ornithologist, the immortal man.

There he stood: how could it be? It was reality yet more than reality.

The hunter walked straight toward

him with the light of recognition in his eyes. He came and stood before Webster and looked down at him with a smile:

"Have you found him, Webster?"

Webster strangely heard his own voice:

"I have not found him."

"You have looked long?"

"I have looked everywhere and I cannot find him."

The hunter sat down and laid on the grass beside him his fowling piece, his game bag holding new species of birds, and his portfolio of fresh drawings. Then he turned upon Webster a searching look as if to draw the inmost truth out of him and asked:

"Why do you look for the Kentucky Warbler?"

Webster hesitated long:

"I do not know," he faltered.

"Something in you makes you seek him, but you do not know what that something is?"

"No, I do not know what it is: I know I wish to find him."

"Not him alone but many other things?"

"Yes, many other things."

"The whole wild life of the forest?"

"Yes, all the wild things in the forest—and the wild forest itself."

"You wish to know about these things—you wish to know them?"

"I wish to know them."

The hunter searched Webster's countenance more keenly, more severely:

"Are you sure?"

There was silence. The forest was

becoming more wonderful. The singing of the unseen birds more silvery sweet. It was beyond all reality. Webster answered:

"I am sure."

The hunter hurled questions now with no pity:

"Would you be afraid to stay here all night alone?"

"I would not."

"If, during the night, a storm should pass over the forest with thunder deafening you and lightning flashing close to your eyes and trees falling everywhere, you would fear for your life and that would be natural and wise; but would you come again?"

"I would."

"If it were winter and the forest were bowed deep with ice and snow

and you were alone in it, having lost your way, would you cry enough? Would you hunt for a fireside and never return?"

"I would not."

"You can stand cold and hunger and danger and fatigue; can you be patient and can you be persevering?"

"I can."

"Look long and not find what you look for and still not give up?"

"I can."

There was silence for a little while: the mood of the hunter seemed to soften:

"Do you know where you are, Webster?"

"I do not know where I am."

"You did not know then, that this is the wilderness of your forefathers—

the Kentucky pioneers. You have wandered back to it."

"I did not know."

"Have you read their great story?"

"Not much of it."

"Are you beginning to realise what it means to be sprung from such men and women?"

"I cannot say."

"But you want to do great things?"

"If I loved them."

The hunter stood up and gathered his belongings together. His questions had become more kind as though he were satisfied. He struck Webster on his shoulder.

"*Come,*" he said, as with high trust, "*I will show you the Kentucky warbler.*"

He looked around and his eyes fell upon the forest brook. He walked over

to it, to discover in what direction it ran and beckoned.

"We'll follow this stream up: the spring may not be far away." He glanced at the tree-tops: "It is nearly noon: the bird will come to the spring to drink and to bathe."

Webster followed the hunter as he threaded his way through the forest toward the source of the brook.

Not many yards off his guide turned:

"There is the spring," he said, pointing to a green bank out of which bubbled the cool current.

"Let us sit here. Make no movement and make no noise."

How tense the stillness! They waited and listened. Finally the hunter spoke in an undertone:

"Did you hear that?"

Away off in the forest Webster heard the song of a bird. Presently it came nearer. Now it was nearer still. It sounded at last within the thicket just above the spring, clear, sweet, bold, emphatic notes distinctly repeated at short intervals. And then—

There he was—the Kentucky Warbler!

Webster could see every mark of identification. The bird had come out of the dense growth and showed himself on the bough of a sapling about twenty feet from the earth, in his grace and shapeliness and manly character. With a swift, gliding flight downward he lighted on a sweeping limb of a tree still nearer, within a few inches of the ground. Then he dropped to the ground and moved about, turning over dead leaves. He was only several

yards away and Webster could plainly trace the yellow line over his eye, the blackish crown and black sides of the throat, the underparts all of solid yellowish gold, the upper parts of olive green. An instant later the bird was on the wing again, hither, thither, up and down, continually in motion. No white in the wings, none in the tail feathers. Once he stopped and poured out his loud, musical song—unlike any other warbler's. A moment later he was on the ground again, with a manner of self-possession, dignity—as on his namesake soil, Kentucky.

Webster had sat bent over toward him, forgetful of everything else. At last drawing a deep breath, he looked around gratefully, remembering his guide.

No one was near him. Webster saw the hunter on the edge of the thicket yards away; he stood looking back, his figure dim, fading. Webster, forgetful of the bird, cried out with quick pain:

"Are you going away? Am I never to see you again?"

The voice that reached him seemed scarcely a voice; it was more like an echo, close to his ear, of a voice lost forever:

"*If you ever wish to see me, enter the forest of your own heart.*"



V

THE ROAD

WEBSTER sprang to his feet in the depths of the strange summer-dark forest: that is to say, he awoke with a violent start and found himself sitting on his bed with his feet hanging over one side.

It was late to be getting up. The sun already soared above the roof of the cottage opposite his window and the light slanted in full blaze against his shutters. Shafts penetrated some weather-loosened slats and fell on his

head and shoulders and on the wall behind him. Breakfast must be nearly ready. Fresh cooking odours—coffee odour, meat odour, bread odour—filled the little bathroom-bedroom. Feet were hurrying, scurrying, in the kitchen. Quieter footsteps approached his door along the narrow hall outside and there came a tap:

"Breakfast, Webster!"

It was his mother's voice, indulgent, peaceful, sweet. He suddenly thought that never before had he fully realised how sweet it was, had always been, notwithstanding he disappointed her.

He got up and went across to open his shutters and had taken hold of the catch, when he was arrested in his movement. At night he tilted the shutters, so that the morning sun

might not enter crevices and shine in his face and awaken him. Now looking down through the slats, he discovered something going on in the yard beneath his window. Elinor had come tipping around the corner of the cottage. She held one dark little witch-like finger unconsciously pressed against her tense lips. Her dark eyes were brimming with a secret, mischievous purpose. A ribbon which looked like a huge, crumpled purple morning-glory was knotted into the peak of her ravenish hair. Her fresh little gown, too, suggested the colours of the purple morning-glory and her whole presence, with a freshness as of dew-drops formed amid moonbeams at midnight, somehow symbolised that flower which surprises us at dawn as having matured

its unfolding in the dark: half sinister, half innocent.

With cautious, delicate steps, which could not possibly have made any noise in the grass, she approached the window and stopped and lifted the notched pole which was used to hold up the clothes-line in the back yard. Setting the pole on end and planting herself beside it, she pushed it with all her slight but concentrated strength against the window shutters. It struck violently and fell over to the grass in one direction as Elinor, with the silence of a light wind, fled in the other.

Webster stood looking down at it all: he understood now: that was the crashing sound which had awakened him.

It had been Elinor who had ended his dream.

But his dream was not ended. It would never end. It was in him to stay and it was doing its work. The feeling which had surprised him as to the sweetness of his mother's voice but marked the deeper awakening that had taken place in his sleep, an unfolding, his natural growth. It was this growth that now animated him as he smiled at Elinor's flying figure. Her prank had not irritated him: no intrigue of hers would ever annoy him again. Instead, the idea struck him that Elinor must be thinking of him a great deal, if so much of her life—incessantly active as it was with the other children of the cottages—were devoted to plans to worry him. She must often have him in mind quite to herself, he reflected; and this fresh

picture of Elinor's secret brooding about him somehow for the first time touched him tenderly and finely.

He turned back from the window shutters without opening them and sat on the edge of his bed. He could not shake off his dream. How could it possibly be true that there was no such forest as he had wandered into in his dream—that Kentucky wilderness of the old heroic days? Could anything destroy in him the certainty that with wildly beating heart he had seen the living colours and heard the actual notes and watched the characteristic movements of the warbler? Then, though these things were not real, still they were true and would remain true always.

Thus, often and to many of us, be-

tween closing the curtains of the eyes upon the outer world at night and drawing them wide in the morning, within that closed theatre a stage has been erected and we have stepped forth and spoken some solitary part or played a rôle in a drama that leaves us changed for the rest of our days. Yesterday an old self, today a new self. We have been shifted completely away from our last foot-prints and our steps move off in another direction, taking a truer course.

Beyond all else a high, solemn sense subdued Webster with the thought, that in his sleep he had come near as to unearthly things. The long-dead hunter, who had appeared to him, spoke as though he lived elsewhere than on the earth and lived more nobly; his accents,

the majesty of his countenance, were moulded as by higher wisdom and goodness. Webster was overwhelmed with the feeling that he had been brought near the mystery of life and death and as from an immortal spirit had received his consecration to the forest.

. . . He got down on his knees at his bedside, after a while, though little used to prayer. . . .

When he walked into the breakfast-room with a fresh step and freshened countenance, probably all were not slow to notice the change. Families whose lives run along the groove of familiar routine quickly observe the slightest departure from the customary, whether in voice or behaviour, of any member. There was response soon

after his entrance to something in him obviously unusual.

"My son," said his father, who had laid down his paper to help him to the slice which had been put aside, "the woods must agree with you"; and he even scraped the dish for a little extra gravy. Ordinarily, when deeply interested in his paper or occasionally when conscious of some disappointment as to his son, he forgot, or was indifferent about, the gravy.

"They do agree with me!" Webster replied, laughing and in fresh tones. He held out his plate hungrily for his slice and he waited for all the gravy that might be coming to him.

"One of the boys has already been here this morning," said his mother, handing him his cup. "They want you

to be sure to meet them this afternoon, not to fail. You must have been dead asleep, for I called you at three different times."

"Did you knock three times?"

Webster asked his question with a sinking of the heart; what if his mother's first knock had awakened him? He might never have finished his dream, might never have dreamed at all. How different the morning might have been, how different the world—if his mother had awakened him before his dream!

He received his cup from her and smiled at her:

"I was dreaming," he said, and he smiled also at the safety of his vision.

Elinor, sitting opposite him, had said nothing. She had finished her

breakfast before he had come in and plainly lingered till he should enter. Since his entrance she had sat restless in her chair, toying with her fork or her napkin, and humming significantly to herself. She had this habit. "You must not sing at the table, Elinor," her mother had once said. "I am *not* singing," Elinor had replied, "I am humming to myself, and *no* one is supposed to listen." Meantime this morning, her quickly shifting eyes would sweep his face questioningly; she must have been waiting for some sign as to what had been the effect of the Thomas Jefferson blue-jay the night before and of the repeated attack on his window shutters.

Often when out of humour with her he had declined to notice her at table;

now once, when he caught her searching glance, he smiled. Dubiously, half with disbelief and half with amazement, she looked steadily back at him for an instant; then she slipped confusedly from her seat and was gone. Webster laughed within himself: "what will she be up to next?" he thought.

It was quiet now at the table: his father had gone back to his paper, his mother was eating the last of her breakfast fruit, and perhaps, thinking that out in the country things were getting ripe. After an interval Webster broke the silence: he was white with emotion.

"Father," he said quietly, "I have decided what I'd like to do."

Webster's father dropped his paper: Webster's mother's eyes were on him.

The years had waited for this moment, the future depended upon it.

"If you and mother do not need me for anything else just yet, I'd like to work my way through the University. But if there's something different you'd rather I'd do, or if you both want me in any other way, I am here."

"My son," exclaimed his father, rudely with the back of his hand brushing away a tear that rolled down his cheek—a tear perhaps started by something in his son's words that brought back his own hard boyhood, "your father is here to work for you as long as he is alive and able. Your mother and I are glad—!" but he got no further: his eyes had filled and his voice choked him.

Webster's mother stood beside him,

her hand on his head, her handkerchief pressed to her eyes.

.

When he had made his preparations for the glad day's adventure and stepped out on the front porch, his father had gone to the bank, his mother was in the kitchen. Elinor was sitting on the top step. Her back was turned. Her sharp little elbows rested on her knees and her face was propped in her palms. Her figure again suggested a crumpled, purple morning-glory—fragile, not threatened by any human violence but imperilled by nature.

She did not look around as he stepped out or move as he passed down. He felt a new wish to say something pleasant but could not quite so conquer himself. As he laid his hand on the yard

gate, he was stopped by these words, reaching his ears from the porch:

"Take me with you!"

He could not believe his ears. Could this be Elinor, his tease, his torment? This wounded appeal, timid pleading —could it proceed from Elinor? He was thrown off his balance and too surprised to act. The words were repeated more beseechingly, wistfully:

"Take me with you, will you, Webster?"

For now that she had given herself away to him, he might as well see everything: that at last she was openly begging that she be admitted to a share in his plans and pleasures, that he no longer disdain to play with her.

He spoke with rough embarrassment over his shoulder:

"You can't go today. Nobody can go today. I'm going miles out into the country to the woods."

"But some day will you take me over into the woods yonder?"

After a while he turned toward her: "Yes, I will."

"Thank you very much. Thank you very much, indeed, Webster!"

The tide of feeling began to rush toward her:

"There are some wild violets over there, Elinor, wild blue violets and wild white violets—thick beds of them in the shade."

"Oh, how lovely!" She clasped her hands and knotted them tensely under her chin and kept her eyes fixed more hopefully on him.

"There is a flock of the funniest little

fairies dancing under one of the big forest trees, each carrying the queerest little green parasol."

"How perfectly, perfectly lovely!"

"And I found one little cedar tree. If they'll let us, I'll dig it up and bring it home and plant it in the front yard. It will be your own cedar tree, Elinor."

"Oh, Webster! Could anything be more lovely of you?"

"You and I and Jenny will go some day soon—"

"No, no, no!" cried Elinor, stamping her feet fiercely and wringing her hands. "I don't want Jenny to go! I won't have Jenny! Just you and I! Not Jenny! Just you and I!"

"Then just you and I," he said, smiling at her and moving away.

"Wait!"

She darted down the steps and ran to him and drew his face over and laid her cheek against his cheek, clinging to him.

He struggled to get away, laughing with his new happiness: tears welled out of her eyes with hers.

Webster had taken to the turnpike.

The morning was cool, the blue of the sky vast, tender, noble. Rain during the night had left the atmosphere fresh and clear and the pike dustless. Little knobs of the bluish limestone jutted out. The greyish grass and weeds on each side had been washed till they looked green again.

The pike climbed a hill and from

this hilltop he turned and looked back. He could see the packed outskirts of the city and away over in the heart of it church spires rising here and there. The heart of it had once been the green valley through which a stream of the wilderness ran: there Wilson had seen the water mills and the gallows for hanging Kentuckians and the thousand hitched horses and folks sitting on the public square selling cakes of maple sugar and split squirrels.

Soon he passed the pasture where he had spent yesterday. That had done well enough as a beginning: today he would go further. He remembered many things he had seen in the park-like bluegrass woods. Sweet to his ear sounded the call of bobwhite from the yellow grain. He wondered whether

the ailing young crows in the tree-tops had at last taken all their medicine. The curious bird which had watched him out of a hole in the tree-trunk—the chap with the black band across his chest and the speckled jacket and the red cap on the back of his head, was he still on the lookout? What had become of the gorgeous little velvet coach that had travelled across the back of his hand on its unknown road? And that mystery of the high leaves—that wandering disembodied voice: *Se-u-re? Se-u-u.* Did it still haunt the waving boughs?

But miles on ahead in the country, undergrowth, shade, secrecy for wild creatures—his heart leaped forward to these and his feet hastened.

This day with both eyes open, not

shut in sleep, he might find the warbler.

Whole-heartedly, with a boy's eagerness, Webster suddenly took off his hat and ran down the middle of the gleaming white turnpike toward the green forest—toward all, whether much or little, that he was ever to be.



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